

Ep #146: Creating a 6-Figure Income in Less than 3 Hours a Week with Melanie Coddington



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 146.

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.

Hi everybody. I hope your new year is going just the way you want it to. And we had a lot of expectations for this year. We were dreaming of all the things we want it to be or at least what we don't want it to be based on last year. So I hope you're off to a good start.

Today I'm bringing to you a good friend of mine and a client of mine, Melanie Coddington. And this is a really fun show. This episode is about how to make six figures in your business in three hours a week literally. And Melanie's going to tell you all about how she has done that. We laughingly say it took 15 years, which in some ways it did. It really took a few months to make the decision, but it's the process and the mindsets we go through over the years to help us learn how to really create a business that we love.

So Melanie has been an amazing member of the Design You membership and program and has just done so many inspiring things. And I wanted you to hear from her because as you're thinking about your business this year and what you want it to look like and what's possible for you, Melanie shows us what is really possible. She is an interior designer. She's the owner of Coddington Design, a high end design business that focuses on working with female tech industry CEOs.

And then she has another business called Sungrown Studio that is interior design for cannabis dispensaries. And now she's wearing even another hat which is so exciting, and that's coaching women who own cannabis dispensaries how to really thrive in their business, super cool. So get ready to be really inspired by Melanie and her journey, and her mental shifts, and

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the things she's done in her business because they inspire the heck out of me. So here we go, enjoy this interview with Melanie Coddington.

Tobi: Hey Melanie, welcome to the Design You Podcast. I'm so glad you're here today.

Melanie: I'm so thrilled to be here. I've been listening forever and it's just a dream come true to finally be a guest here, so thank you.

Tobi: Well, I'm so honored to have you. And the reason you're here is because you're doing all kinds of cool amazing stuff that I want everybody to hear. So tell everybody a little bit about you before we get into some very exciting conversations.

Melanie: So I've been a high end residential interior designer for 15 years. My company is called Coddington Design. We have gotten more focused on marketing to female tech executives and generally speaking they have families. So that's kind of our niche or our ideal client there. And that's kind of my big bread and butter. That's how I get most of the income that we're going to be talking about today. So I got that kind of running on its own.

And then I started another company called Sungrown Studio which is a CBD cannabis hemp dispensary design studio. So it's interior design but just a really different client and a really different niche. So we have a whole separate website. And then very recently I've started doing business coaching for women who are either entering the cannabis industry or are already established in it. So I've got a lot going on.

Tobi: Yeah. It's so cool. And one of my favorite things is your – tell everybody the name of your group for those who don't know, it's your Facebook group but it's one of your free groups. It's my favorite thing. Tell everybody.

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Melanie: Well, I crowd sourced the name. I went into someone else's group and I was like, "Hey, I'm starting this group for women who have their own businesses in the cannabis industry, what shall we call it?" And the winning choice was Women Who Lead in Weed. And in that group I get to interview really amazing women, kind of pick their brains, ask them all the questions that I want, that I'm curious about, how their path to success has been. It's just been really fun.

Tobi: It's so cool. I don't know if you saw it but when we were recording this, it's going to run after the first of the year, but we're recording about a week or so before Christmas. And I just saw in passing last night on Instagram, Martha Stewart decorating all these cannabis leaf sugar cookies because she and Snoop Dog had just had a whole conversation about weed, and cannabis, and all this stuff.

And the headline that drew my attention, I think it actually came from an article and it took me to Instagram. And it was like Martha Stewart decorates marijuana cookies. And I was like, "What?" It was so cute, they were just shaped like cannabis leaves. And she was like, "And on this lovely cannabis we'll put little red polka dots down the center." And then I was cracking up. But it was awesome.

Melanie: Yeah, it's going really mainstream. I think there's a big future I think in cannabis and probably a lot more designers are going to become interested in it. But there's five new states coming online next year that will be legal either medically or recreationally. And Kristen Bell has a CBD line, I just saw some other celebrity has gotten into it, yeah.

Tobi: Perfect. So you are right where you need to be because it's always fun to be on the front end of a trend or an emerging industry, so bravo for that. Today what we're going to talk about which I think is so cool is the concept of creating a six figure income in three hours a week, right?

Melanie: Yeah. Well, plus.

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Tobi: Three or six?

Melanie: No, it's three hours a week but it's taken me 15 years to get there.

Tobi: Right. I mean and it does, I mean I've been in business for 20 years. But when we finally start to make shifts in our business to create revenue streams or to change how we work or how we show up, which we're going to talk a lot about that and what all you've changed in your traditional design business. But let's first start by talking about this concept because so many people work so hard and still don't hit six figures consistently ever, at least not for themselves, not a salary for themselves.

And you're saying that it's possible to create a six figure income in three hours a week. So tell us what that means and what that looks like.

Melanie: Sure. Well, like I said, it's taken a while to get there but I think one of the first things, the first most important thing I did to achieve this is just making the decision. So deciding, okay, I'm going to have an asset that creates wealth for me rather than I'm going to be the center of this company and the name of this company and all the clients have to come to me.

So I had tried to step away before in 2016, I think I had tried to step away. And I had a lot of mindset stuff come up. And I just found myself right back in the middle of the business even though I had – in theory I could – we were financially set up. We had a lot of things going well but I just wasn't quite there mentally.

Tobi: Yeah. And I had to do this work as well when I started Design You and then started bringing other coaches in to coach. Our identities are so tied to our brand when we have something like a one-on-one business, especially something like interior design. And we get all of our accolades and our stroking, and our validation from being the person that's like the creative, the source of the value and the genius. And even though we might

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want to step away and we're exhausted sometimes, or burned out, or wish somebody else would do part.

Then when you get down to the part about really, really stepping away and even letting other people do things and seeing that it's not exactly the way you would do it, there's a whole host of resistance that comes up around that isn't there?

Melanie: There absolutely is. And I think there also are a lot of – so there's mental stuff and there's financial stuff. So in order to step away from the business one of the things I learned is I needed to have predictable revenue and income come in.

Tobi: Yes, which is also often not how we have designed our business models in a creative or even one-on-one kind of high end type of industry. We wait for the phone to ring. There's a lot of feast or famine. There's not very much predictable about it at all honestly, yeah.

Melanie: Right. And especially because we have – we still do have a majority referral based business. So with the help of Design You and with working with you a little bit privately we were able to create more of a digital marketing plan. So now we're able to bring new customers in that we convert from cold leads to warm leads. I mean it really does work.

Tobi: I love it.

Melanie: It's a lot of steps.

Tobi: Everyone, note to everyone, this stuff actually works if you do all the steps. Seriously I know. And it can be so hard to do all the steps, not because the steps are hard but because we quit on ourselves all the way through because a whole bunch of mindset BS that comes up, right?

Melanie: Yeah. And I love that you talk about this a lot specifically but for interior designers we have those coffee table style websites. We care what our peers think. I had to get over all of that and have a sale style website.

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We created a style quiz. We had to start consistently marketing. It was a whole shift, I'm like, "This doesn't feel very luxury. This doesn't feel very high end." But as soon I started thinking about what my clients actually want and what my clients actually care about, not architects or interior designers, it all works.

Tobi: Yeah. And just for everybody listening who hasn't heard me talk about that before, a coffee table book style website is like you open a pretty coffee table book, like a design, pick your favorite designer. And it's just all these beautiful images and that's the term I use to equate websites that we spend so much money on and we think are so sophisticated. And it's literally just all these full bleed beautiful images but nothing in there about the customer, nothing about their pain points, nothing about how we really solve them.

And it always just sends the message basically of this person is uber talented and I probably can't afford them and I'm sure they're too busy to work with me. And the only way I can find out is if I have the courage to click on the contact button and send them a message that I have to write from scratch. Instead of a sales style which is all customer centric and about what they're dealing with and their pain points. And we give them a whole bunch of different places to raise their hand and say, "Yes, I need your help. Or I'm going to take your quiz, or I'm going to set up a call with you."

And it's just so much more approachable but it messes with your brain a little bit when you've been taught that a sophisticated luxurious high end designer would never have something that looks cheesy, or salesy, or speaks to the customer. But we're shooting ourselves in the foot the whole time. It's like let me show you how important and unapproachable I am.

And so you basically are saying you had done the same thing because we almost all do it. We fall for that and we think that's what, honestly we're really, like you said, we're just trying to impress our peers is what we're

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trying to do. If any of our peers happened on the site, or if Oprah, or Martha Stewart, or whoever we idolize in some crazy world happened on our site, would they think we were sophisticated and legit enough?" That's kind of the rule of thumb.

Melanie: Yeah. And I think the more designers that get out there and do these more elevated sales style websites I think it will become more and more common and acceptable. I mean we've talked about my background, it's not hugely important to me that I'm super accepted in the world.

Tobi: Right. You're like I love to hang out with the groups on the edge, including Women Who Lead in Weed and lots of other things, yeah. But having said that you really started to understand the difference in what would convert sales for you and went to the actual path of how do we get from no leads to leads, and leads that aren't converting to leads that are converting. And that's a whole other language than what you typically hear a creative talking about with their business.

Melanie: Right. And we had to set up some new offerings for our clients. So we used to have one, you could work with us and we couldn't tell you how much it would cost but it would definitely be expensive. And we still have our core full service interior design, but now we have you can spend about three grand with us and get a full room design. Or what's really been taking off is I think it's 195 an hour, you work with someone on the team for whatever you want and it's all virtual.

Tobi: Yeah, I love it.

Melanie: You can buy five hours, you can buy – we have clients that just keep going month after month. We're like, "Alright, well, let's tackle this little area, let's do this." And it's been working really well.

Tobi: It's so good and so smart. And the exact opposite of what we would imagine doing in a lot of ways. And what you're not saying is we're going out at an hourly rate and trekking around to people's houses and not

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making it worth our time. You're literally virtual, you're controlling the experience and you can get in and out but actually add real value to people.

And so that is in a lot of ways, even though you need human resources, it's pretty scalable as long as it – if you get more business you just have to have enough designers or creatives to fulfill it. But it's not you fulfilling that service.

Melanie: Yeah. So I mean getting down to three hours a week on Coddington Design has been interesting because that means I don't know all the little details about how each service is delivered. I'm not totally in the weeds on that anymore. But one thing that I had to set up at the beginning is I just – is really important I think. One of the things I'm always coaching women about is money and paying yourself first and making sure you're getting paid. So that six figures, that is on a W2. That means we're paying taxes on it. That's my salary no matter what.

So I know if for some reason our bank accounts started getting low or our numbers started looking off it's not like I'm not going to pay myself. It's in there, it's set up, it's a real red flag if we're worried about covering payroll. And then I can do quarterly or annually bonuses on top of that depending on how well our profit's going and what's going on. So that's like I think step one is deciding.

Step two is getting yourself on the payroll at a real salary that makes sense. And obviously making sure you have the clients and the work to support that. And then it's a lot of just letting go with clients. I mean I was so nervous to tell my really high end clients, "I've got to run this company. Look, I'm sorry, I'm not doing this anymore." And I didn't get all smiles and rainbows, I definitely got some pushback from clients.

Tobi: So did most of them stay? Did some of them leave? What was that experience, the result?

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Melanie: They all stayed, actually they all stayed.

Tobi: That's awesome. So your worst fears were not reality at all, yeah.

Melanie: No. I mean I think I really overvalued my role in the design process.

Tobi: I love that. And when you told me that, the last time you told me that I was like, "That's so good." Because we all do, we're like, "How could it possibly run without us?" Yet it can and it will if you set it up that way, right?

Melanie: Absolutely. So I was super nervous to tell my clients, this all started actually pre pandemic. So I was already starting to build up my team and then also hand off my clients. But I haven't seen a client since February, yeah.

Tobi: Amazing. So what do you do with the three hours that you're working in that design business? Because the rest of your time you're coaching women that are in the cannabis industry. You're doing these other things. But what are you doing with those hours?

Melanie: So I'm managing my team still, that is something that just I'm working on my five year plan right now and that's something that eventually I would like someone else to start doing. I'm looking at all the financial and marketing reports. So I don't do those but I do review them all. And then I'm still the person who does the hiring right now. Again, I could see handing that off and then the long term planning. So weekly that looks like one or two meetings with my team and then just looking at all the numbers.

Tobi: Yeah, it's awesome. And so can you tell us a little bit more about what had to shift or what did you learn about this process with your team? So did you have to make changes there when you started, not only to create these other revenue streams but then knowing you were going to – you're a safety net and you're helping create the vision for the company, not the vision for the projects themselves. But what about the team, what

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has to happen for one to be able to step away? Is it more about the people or more about the systems or both?

Melanie: I think it's both. For me being a creative creating systems is like man there is nothing I enjoy less than creating systems and procedures. But I force myself to do it. So I started by okay, let me delegate tasks. I'm going to start with tasks. And I would do a quick Loom video of something that – every time I was doing something I was like, "This is dumb, why am I doing this?" I would take an extra whatever it was, 10 minutes, create a Loom video which is just a recording software where you can share your screen and say, "This is how I do this." And then I'd save the video.

And then I'd let someone else actually write up the written procedure and start doing it.

Tobi: Exactly, yes, I love it. That's my favorite process too by the way and that's so smart, yeah.

Melanie: Yes, and that's from that book, Clockwork. I think that's where I got that. But then you also have to delegate responsibilities which is much harder. So that's when you start getting your team where they can make the decisions on your behalf or on the client's behalf. So there was a lot of me talking to people on my team saying, "I don't want you to please me, I want you to please the client. Think about the client." And just starting that mental shift a couple of years ago, I'm fortunate that I've got a team that's been with me for a long time.

I've definitely had some people that were not up to the task and needed a lot more direction. We don't have middle management. Everyone reports directly to me really so that doesn't work, it needs to be someone that's a self-starter.

Tobi: Yeah. So I think that's so smart what you just said because I think you're exactly right. And what happens and what people don't understand the dynamic is as the owner of the company we're typically focused on

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pleasing the client. We're not just trying to please ourself. We're like, "What do they need? What's going to make them buy? What's going to make them happy? What's going to make them want to hire us again?" And I think you're so right, what we don't notice is we get employees in and they're not focused on the client.

They don't want to get in trouble with us. They don't want to lose their job. Their loyalty is to us and who they're trying to please is us because they want maybe more money, or a promotion, or a long term position, or just to make us happy. And you're right, that is such a shift. And I love how simply you put that because it's so true. And I think people aren't noticing that when they're like, "Why can my team not do this yet I can?"

And just that one shift you talked about can fix that problem a lot of times because noticing who they're focused on pleasing and what result you're trying to create. I think that is a huge, huge shift, so I love that, really good insight for people. Okay, so I want to talk a little bit more about the digital marketing process and these products and things for you because it definitely is what I teach in Design You and you've been such an awesome exciting member. You've taken so much action.

But there's a lot of that that really is just trial and error because it's with anything else, you can read a book, you can take a program. There's a lot of ideas that you can try. You don't try all of them necessarily, you pick the ones that work for you. But can you speak to that experience a little bit because you at some point started to decide what you wanted your different offerings to be? I love how you shared that you went from the typical yes we can do anything you want and it's going to be really, really expensive and it's going to take forever.

And we have no idea really what any of those details are but we hope that you take the leap and hire us anyway. And then you shifted to the thing that makes so much sense of having at least a couple of things that are contained, that people know exactly what they're getting. They know

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exactly the deliverables. They know exactly the price and it's not necessarily something that's going to take forever or be all in. And it may not include some of the typical parts of a creative business like purchasing or other things.

So what was that experience and process like to get from having none of those to now having them really dialed in and working for you?

Melanie: Well, one thing that you teach is to have a service ladder, meaning there are lower price, medium price and higher price options. So we experimented, and changed, and iterated. So we had started with something, I can't remember what we called it, it had a really cute name. And it was like essentially we're going to make you a Pinterest board where you can shop from that Pinterest board. And it was, I want to say a 1,000 bucks or something. No one bought it and no one wanted that. We were like, "Okay." So we let that go.

And then that's where we came up with the 195 an hour virtual consultation because people had like, "Well, I want two pieces in my mud room. And then I want a whole dining room. And then I want four pieces in this other area." And we were like, "Okay, well, we can't really package that. But if we make sure it's a high enough hourly price and we're doing it virtually we can do that for people."

And we stopped purchasing. I mean that was sort of a financial decision too. We only purchase for our really high end clients. We don't purchase for people that are going to buy one room from us or whatever.

Tobi: Yes. And so for those projects do you source locally, or you source online resources, or both, or their preference?

Melanie: Well, this is where like I said I'm not really in the weeds on the details.

Tobi: No. You're like I'd have to actually get one of my team members on. I love this answer, Melanie. The fact that you don't know is so authentic to

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the fact that you're not in the weeds, which is critical. So to the best of your knowledge you find some kind of source and send them to it. It's in the process of, yeah, of [inaudible].

Melanie: I know that we send them links, I am clear on that. And I'm assuming it's all retail.

Tobi: That is awesome. You have no idea how much I love that.

Melanie: I love it too. I mean I love not knowing.

Tobi: Well, and there's what you've said so far that's so helpful is that you iterated and that's what I see people afraid to do. They're like, "I want to pick the perfect thing. I want it to sell perfectly immediately. I want it to be all tied with a bow and then we're out."

And what I know and what you now also know is that – and like anything else, you're sort of guessing based on some educated guesses of what you think people need. But then if you try it and the feedback is it's not what people need then you just shift it a little bit. And it's not a big deal but you just shift it and kind of massage it and tweak it until it fits and hits. And the way you know it works is that people start buying it.

Melanie: Exactly. Or the first thing I was talking about that didn't work very well, one of the clients who bought it, she kept coming back and being like, "I want more options. I want more choices. I want more things." And it wasn't sustainable at that level of a price. So then we – I think we added a \$1,000 to our room design because it was like, "Okay, well, that gives us a little more flexibility that we can give the clients what they want then."

Tobi: Yeah, so smart. So I think one of the biggest things here that we should get into is what is the mindset? What are the shifts and kind of what's the thinking that has to happen to be willing to have parts of your company that you literally can't answer questions about, just like you just did with me, but still be confident to be in that lead role and know it can work? Because people are so fearful to let go of control. But I say all the

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time, “Do you think Jeff Bezos knows what’s happening at some low level part of an Amazon local distribution centre?” Of course not.

But you have to work your way to that process of getting out of the way. So talk to us a little bit about what that progression was with your mindset?

Melanie: Well, the first time I tried to step away I was like, okay, I would go into the office and I would have nothing to do. Tobi, I would just be like, “So what’s everyone having for lunch?” And so I decided to join an entrepreneur’s organization that you have to have a million dollars in revenue to join. I was like, “Wow, this is very exciting. This is going to be a really exclusive group of people who really are on it and know what they’re doing.” It was a lot of money and a big kind of time commitment.

And I would go to this group and everyone else was just starting other companies. They all had one bread and butter business and then they were like, “What’s next?” So these were all serial entrepreneurs which I had not identified myself as being one of those. I was like I have this service business. And so then I started having to think like okay, so the shift comes from – it’s like okay, so I have to be an entrepreneur, I have to be an owner. And then the mental shift is like okay, it’s not about the Jones’ and their living room.

It’s about the team. It’s about the goals of the company. It’s about who we’re serving. And it’s just a big shift and it took me a couple of years to actually change how I saw myself as a person.

Tobi: Yes, which essentially you stepped into becoming, into leading your company instead of running your company or being the service provider. You completely shifted, not even just a CEO, but more to owner or leader and that’s a whole different – it is a different approach, a different mindset.

Melanie: Yeah. I think the toughest part for me, I think everyone’s going to have a different pain point. The toughest part for me was letting go of – one of our core values as a company was happy clients. And I’m like, you know,

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we had talked in Design You about how that's not a great – you can't really make people happy. You can do the best you can do and then it's up to them to make themselves happy.

Tobi: Yeah. You can have the perfect project with a perfect installation and they can still be mad because it's not what they thought, or it cost too much, or there's so many things out of our control. We could be happy with our projects but we can't guarantee that the other person is going to be happy. We have no control over their emotions and their thoughts.

Melanie: Yeah, which that – I don't know why, for me that was a big mindset shift. And I felt like if I was in there messing with the projects I can make the clients happier because I knew them. And that's not simply true. I mean what the clients want is – it varies, but generally speaking they want things to be on time, on budget and to look beautiful. I don't personally need to do that.

Tobi: Yeah, and solving for that. How do we solve for the math problem kind of, of on time? What do we do to create on time? What do we do as a company to create on budget? What do we do as a company to create how we define beautiful? And it can be systemized, right?

Melanie: Yeah. And I think that other thing that was really important for me to get my mindset right was just modeling for my team failure and experimentation. So just saying, "Hey, we're going to create some new products, we're going to see what happens. And if no one buys them or people aren't happy we're not going to take that personally. We're not going to make it dramatic. We're just going to take it as information and iterate and move on." And then allowing my team to fail. Huge.

Tobi: Yeah. That's so enormous. You know I went through that process about, over the last year of – I was pretty good with me failing and you probably were too. But it's a whole other thing to let some other people fail on your dime and your time. And so you have to really dial in your thoughts

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about it because our typical thoughts are something like how did this happen? What were they thinking?

And an underlying belief that had we been handling it we for sure would not have made that same mistake, which of course is not true because we make mistakes all the time. We just weren't tracking how many things we did wrong. But we can keep score really easily of what other people are doing wrong. And a lot of times it's because we see it as money going out of the door.

And so I know, personally knowing what I know about you is that part of letting people fail is you've got to be willing to spend some money or invest some money and chalk up a certain amount of money to that experimentation that you were talking about. Because again a lot of things that I see hold people back from doing what you're doing is they want to get it right on the first try. They don't want to fail. And they certainly don't want to do what they call, as I use air quotes, wasting money.

And most people's definition is if we tried this one thing for one time, Facebook Ad, new offering whatever it is and the answer that we got from the client was a no, then it failed and that was a waste of time and waste of money but that's not true at all.

So can you tell us what that looked like for you as far as not only your mindset around it but even what were you willing to invest? Was there a limit on what people could spend? Did you set budgets about how much money you were willing to spend trying and testing things? Were you just willing to spend whatever knowing you could then go create revenues to pay for it? What was your approach to getting into this sort of abundance mindset about it's going to take some time and money and I'm okay with that?

Melanie: The first thing I had to do was spend more on my team which was hard. So that was a big game changer for me over a year ago. Last year I brought on a senior designer up here in Northern California who was more

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than I wanted to spend. And I was like, “Ugh.” But then she did a photo shoot all by herself. I mean I came out and looked at the flowers but I was like, “Yeah, it looks great.”

Tobi: That is literally, like I would pay all day long to just remove the stress and open up the time in your life, right, because your time is money?

Melanie: Exactly. And it was so great and that was a positive baby step in terms of, let me spend money and that went really well. When I say, “Be prepared for your team to make mistakes or allow them to.” No one made any big expensive mistakes, just little things, or maybe we got fired by a client but we probably would have gotten fired if I was running it too. We didn’t screen them very well.

Tobi: They weren’t a fit, yeah.

Melanie: Yeah, they just weren’t a fit. But when I think about digital marketing, there is an investment and I didn’t have a specific budget per se per month that I’m willing to experiment with. We’re going to implement that next year. But I would just sort of use my intuition and my judgment on what I was willing to play with that month. And then the really key thing, and I drive everyone that works for me crazy with this, is analytics. How do we measure if it’s working? I’m not going to do something if there’s literally no way to measure it.

So I kind of struggle with Pinterest for that reason. I mean it drives a ton of traffic to our site. But I’m like, “Where exactly are they going? And are they good leads? And what do we think about that?” So right now we’re going to invest next year in a new lead magnet besides the style quiz which is going to be more focused on people who we know want to invest in probably remodeling. It’ll be some kind of budget guide, so that was a more serious person. They don’t just want to know their style, they’re searching for something that we’re probably going to offer, so yeah.

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Tobi: Yeah. And so when you focus on things like the math part of it, the money you spend and the analytics, the measurements, the data, which is what you're saying. That's completely different than what we typically do is the more drama side of, well, no one's hired us, this must be failing. And I love that you got, like me, you're kind of geeked out about that information because that's where the magic is. And most people don't want to think of it that way, especially us creatives who want to be touchy feely.

But I love exactly what you're saying is you go, "I bought this ad, or I created this freebie lead magnet guide thing that we're going to put out there. How many people clicked? How many people downloaded it? How many people just went to the landing page and didn't do either of those? And did they come from social or did they come organic, or did they come because we paid for an ad and we drove them there?" And you literally look at the data. And that's how you're making decisions on what you're going to do next.

Melanie: Right. And that's a shift for most creatives I would say to think of it more as this asset that's creating money for me than what is everyone else doing. I think that's how I used to make decisions as a designer. I would look around and be like, "They seem like they're number one on Google. What are they doing? Or they seem like they have really good clients. What are they doing?" I should probably do a showcase house too", or whatever it was. And it would be snap decisions in the moment. Now I've a plan and I measure the plan, it's just a different way.

Tobi: Yeah. And all of the things we used to do when we were operating that other way were mainly things that had no way to measure their success, a showcase house, an ad in a print magazine. You're like I wonder how many eyeballs have seen it. I don't know how many people walked through the showcase house and are thinking about hiring me but I wasn't there at every moment so I don't know their name, I don't have their email. I have no idea if they picked up one of our cards. I don't know if they even skipped my room altogether.

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And so I think this is such a great shift because the typical go to things that we thought of in creative industries before has been all the things that were impossible to measure. Which led, like you said, from the beginning to revenues that were not measurable because they weren't recurring or they weren't anything that you could really understand, or project, or predict. And so I love what you're saying and it's what I believe of course too is that if you're marketing and your approach is measurable then your results, and your income, and your finances should also be measurable from that.

Melanie: Yeah, and it's just it's something that digital marketing allows you to do, it's really, you know, I would just feel like I was banging my head against the wall because I'm like, "I don't know when the next referral's coming in." And there's only so many times you can send your clients flowers or send them an email and be like, "Do you know anyone else?"

Tobi: Right. We're like, "We're taking clients for January but space is limited. Grab your space today." Or we don't want our contractors to have a window, we better get started. All of that false urgency and stuff that we tried, that's so transparent and everybody knows and it doesn't work on anyone. So I think for people listening that aren't Design You members yet, that haven't taken my Digital Marketing for Creatives course, that haven't done all the legwork you've done. Can you just speak a little bit more?

Because they're like, "What do you mean? What do you mean digital marketing?" But we've described your products, we've talked in digital lingo, leads and conversions and that kind of stuff. But just to kind of help people understand, maybe your room refresh or whatever that package is that's in the \$3,000 range, what's that process look like for really kind of beginning to end or beginning to market to a conversion where they buy?

Melanie: Okay. So we call ours The Curated Room, it's a one room design package that is a 100% virtual and we send you links and you go buy everything yourself if you're a customer. So the way people would find out about that would be by landing on our website some way. What we are

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going to start doing next year is running Google Ads to a freebie. Now, a freebie is something that people download in exchange for an email address and then we email them.

We have an opt-in, I don't know if this is required but people can get the freebie and then they either – they check a box, either yes or no, I want to be on your list. So we've added that. And then if they say yes they want to be on our list then we send them three kind of welcome emails saying, "Here are your style quiz results." That's what the lead magnet we're running right now, or the freebie we're running right now. So people can find that either on Google, or on Pinterest, or on social media.

And then once people get those three emails from us they know a little bit more about our company. And they're kind of like what I would call warm leads. And the idea is that they get an email from us every week after that. So we do a blog post that we turn into an email. We also do social media posts. And the people on our list should eventually start buying from us. We're still working on that because we didn't have a welcome email series until two months ago.

Tobi: Yeah, because there's a lot of moving parts. I mean what you now know and what I've learned over the years of putting the digital process together is that there are a lot of parts to it and there's a lot of options, all the things you talk about. And we teach all of about all of those in Design You, about lead magnets, and landing pages, and email series, and all that. But it's impossible to just get it, if you took the time to get it all done before you ever started using any of it, you would be out of business or dead by then, it would take forever.

So I love what you're saying because there are so many options. But I think that's one of the reasons you've done so well is you didn't wait until all your ducks were perfectly in a row and you felt 100% secure. You're like, "Okay, we can start putting this freebie out in the world and getting people on a list. And then we can start testing some emails to them and see what happens.

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And then we can go set up a sales campaign and start selling the hourly product, or The Curated Room product, and testing, and see what converts people.”

And that’s what that process looks like for you. So for The Curated Room or the other hourly rate you’re just getting them through your style quiz into your email list. And then you’re just sending regular emails as you should to what we call nurture them, warm them up, get to know them better where they trust you, they like you, all those terms and marketing, know, like and trust. And then at certain times you’re having a marketing campaign, or even just an email that presents a certain product that they can click through to buy or whatever, educating them and that kind of thing.

Melanie: Yeah. We’ll try a special, we’re like, “Okay, two hours free if you buy this, whatever, to our list, only people that have decided that they want to hear from us. The other thing we do is we have a discovery call, I think we might name that something better. But it’s basically 20 minutes on a call with an interior designer to walk you through all the options of does it make more sense for you to do x, y or z? And that’s just a button they can click on the website.

So they can buy a room from us directly on the website. But we know that no one’s going to buy from us unless they talk to us first because it’s a higher ticket item. So we made it really easy, there’s a button on our website that can just call us.

Tobi: Yeah, so good.

Melanie: So we have automated calendars to each designers.

Tobi: I love it, yeah. And so all your designers that are on the team have a certain number of hours allotted that they’re going to take sales calls and you can book with them, yeah, that’s so cool. And what you’re essentially alluding to which I think is so important is that a website alone doesn’t sell anything for most people. And I think people confuse that. They’re like, “If I

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just get the really prettiest – if I build it, they will come. If I get it all listed in the services listed they will buy it.” And as people can’t see you right now, but you’re shaking your head no.

Because that’s not how that works, but how it does work if you want conversions is exactly what you’re describing and what you’ve done, and what I’ve done, and what I teach, is that you have to put the digital machine in place. You have to be driving traffic, or eyeballs if you want to call it that, to your quiz, and then they have to take an action and click and fill it out. And it’s enticing and fun, I love your quiz, I took it too, I get your emails.

And then they’re on your list and then you have to actively be confident and keep selling to them, and keep showing up, and keep testing and trying things to see what gets people to say yes, right?

Melanie: Exactly. And I mean we’re still at the beginning phases of the email marketing but yeah, we got the website up with our service ladder quickly before we even had emails going out. And then we had, I don’t know the right word for this, like a stale list, we had an old list. We get multiple unsubscribes every week because our list is so old.

Tobi: Yeah, and you should, and that’s the other thing people don’t like. All the things you’re talking about, selling, putting yourself out there, spending money, paying well for your employees, stepping out, everything you’ve described today sounds miserably uncomfortable in some ways, yet it is the ticket to the life that we really want. But if you’re doing a good job of marketing, you’re going to have a lot of unsubscribes every week, that’s how it works.

You attract some people, you repel some people, some people were attracted to you and got your service but their rooms are done. And so then they just decide I want to clean out my inbox. I’m tired of getting emailed by everybody. I do this every week. I unsubscribe from people that I love but I’m just like I don’t need their services right now. I know where to find them.

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I just don't want that noise in my inbox. And so knowing to not take that personally and that that's not a popularity contest.

But also like you now know a stale list is a terrible thing to have because it's an illusion and it's frustrating. You're like, "Why do we have all these people on the list but none of them are buying?" So you actually want all those people to unsubscribe.

Melanie: Yeah. And that's getting over that fear, for me, I was like I used to look at every person that unsubscribed, not in the last couple of years but I would be like, "I wonder what we did."

Tobi: I wonder why they're mad at us. How did we offend them?

Melanie: It's so silly, I mean if you think about it, it's not about that, it's like who wants to hear from us? Great, please enjoy. So when we first started emailing our list regularly we'd add people to our list but we'd look at our results and like, "Oh, we actually lost people, we didn't gain anyone." Now we lose people but we're net up every week. We're adding to our list every week, but we still get unsubscribes too.

Tobi: Well, and everybody I know that's doing this well says that every time they send an email they get dozens, if not, hundreds, if not more, depending on the size of their list, unsubscribes every time. And that makes sense because again it's not about you, it's that whoever's getting the email is at some place mentally in their own life and they're like, "I don't need that anymore, or I'm tired of getting so many emails." And it just reminded them that they were on your list.

I literally do it every day. I probably unsubscribe from 10 lists a day because I didn't even know I was still on something. And I'm just of the mindset of constraining these days. I do it on Instagram to people, or I unfriend people. And people are like, "Why do you do that?" And I'm like, it's not even that I don't like them or wouldn't want to have dinner with them

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if I saw them at market. It's just that I want to control kind of the noise and constrain sort of things in my own life.

And so for that very reason, if I'm saying, I un-follow some of you all and I love you, but we have to know that it doesn't mean anything negative about us for somebody to unsubscribe. It just means they're not in the market to buy our thing right now and that's okay.

Melanie: Yeah. And that's that whole shift or deciding to be an owner of a company because then you're just looking at the numbers. You're just really looking at we're net up, great. I think our email messaging is fine. It's a total mindset shift to even think about it that way.

Tobi: Right, because you're not looking at names at all, nor am I. When people in Design You will say, "Well, I did this and 80 people unsubscribed and including one of my best clients." I'm like, "How do you even know?" I mean I know how you know but I'm like, "Why do you even know that?" I have no idea who subscribes or unsubscribes ever. I don't get a notification and I certainly don't go looking for that information, because how helpful is that? And like you said, a trend, looking at a trend is this working or not working, super helpful.

Looking at the fact that Mary Sue unsubscribed and now you're mad at her, not helpful at all, zero helpfulness in the realm of creating a profitable business, right?

Melanie: It's so true, yeah.

Tobi: Yeah, awesome, amazing. Okay, so anything else before we wrap up? I'm going to have you tell people where to find you because they're going to want to follow you and see all your amazing things. But anything else that we haven't discussed that was key in you creating this three hours a week six figure salary?

Which let's be clear, then your salary now gets to be more than that because you're off doing other genius things and one-on-one coaching and

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all the other stuff. So it's just one part of your salary, the set dependable part right now is six figures and everything else is a bonus, right?

Melanie: Yeah. I would say that just to reiterate, it's like decide that you want to do this first of all. Allow your team to make mistakes. Delegate responsibilities, not just tasks, I think that's super important. And just get out of the drama of the numbers, just really look at the numbers, that's how you get into that CEO mindset.

Tobi: Totally, data over drama, I think you're 100% right. And even to delegate responsibilities I love. And I even sometimes call it delegate results, not even just responsibility because what you're basically saying to the person you delegate to is not, "You're responsible for these tasks." It's, "I want you to create this result, come let me know when you've accomplished that." And that's a whole other level of ownership with people. "I want you to do this thing. I want it to look and feel this way", generally, "Here's the outcome I'm looking for, go produce that result."

But as you said you're not going to take kind of a baby newbie inexperienced person, team member, low paid, any of that stuff and be able to delegate results really. You're only going to really be able to delegate tasks to that kind of person. And when you're delegating results you're talking about a certain level of strategist, thinker person who makes stuff happen, right?

Melanie: Exactly, yeah, I think that's so true.

Tobi: Yeah, so good. Well, tell everybody where to find you, whether they want to find Coddington Designs, or Women Who Lead in Weed, or all the things, where should they look for you?

Melanie: Oh my God, I have way too many social accounts but we're at Coddington Design on Instagram and Facebook it's at Sungrown Studio on Instagram. And our website it's Coddington Design and Sungrown Studio.

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Tobi: Awesome. Amazing. Well, thank you so much. This was just brilliant, and refreshing, and makes me just beam because I love to hear what you're doing. And you inspire me so much. I learn from you because I haven't even stepped away in a lot ways that I would like to. So, thank you for throwing down the gauntlet so that I am like, "Well, if Melanie can do it, then why the hell am I still doing these eight things over here that I did this week?"

Melanie: Well, thank you, you just made my whole week by saying that, a nice compliment, thank you.

Tobi: Well, it's true and I mean it. And thank you so much for sharing and being so open. And I adore you and I love you.

Melanie: Me too. Well, wonderful, thank you.

Tobi: Awesome. Okay.

Okay, so are you inspired now to change your business and to create a business you really, really love? Are you thinking you'd want to be working less in your business in 2021? I don't know if you want to get all the way to three hours but heck, it sounds pretty appealing to me on a lot of days. So I hope you got some major takeaways.

And if you want to have this kind of approach to your business then head over to tobifairley.com/designyou and get on the wait list because we're going to be opening up Design You again pretty soon and you could be in our next cohort of amazing creative entrepreneurs who learn to run your business the way Melanie has learned to run her business and create a business and a life that you absolutely love. Okay, and I'll see you back here next week with another great and inspiring episode of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

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