

# Ep #152: How Are You Showing Up on Instagram? with Tyler J. McCall



## Full Episode Transcript

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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #152: How Are You Showing Up on Instagram? with Tyler J. McCall

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 152.

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, hey friends, it's the middle of February. My gosh, this year is going to be as fast as all of them, or faster. It's always hard, the older you get the faster the years go, that may very well be true since I recently turned 49, time's just flying by. But I'm so glad you're here today, this episode is a good one. Now, why is it good? It is that relative.

This is a good episode for sure if you're on the path to building an antiracist business. But that's not all this episode's good for, because we talk a whole lot about showing up authentically in the social media space, in particular on Instagram and then we get into politics and antiracism and all of those wonderful things. But my guest today is Tyler J. McCall. And Tyler is a business and Instagram marketing strategist for online business owners, digitalpreneurs, creatives like us. I mean he's the go-to guy for Instagram.

I think I first heard of Tyler a year or two ago when he was on Amy Porterfield's podcast. And I've been following and listening to him ever since. And I have just been extremely inspired by the way he has shown up in the last, gosh, close to a year, especially post summer of 2020 and the George Floyd murder and all the things that have called so many of us to show up differently in our businesses. And he tells you in the episode what that looked like for him and how he was being quieted in a lot of ways and how he started showing up differently.

But before we even get there we talk about some really important things like how to really be authentic. That word is so overused I think. And what does it even mean to be authentic? And we talk about knowing your own truth and your story and how to tell that story through your social media, in particular Instagram. And Tyler has a philosophy that I so wholeheartedly

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agree with, that your personal worth and the number of Instagram followers that you have are not at all connected. They do not mean your worth is not defined by the number of followers you have.

And we talk about the all important conversation of how we so often want to wait and postpone things because when x happens then we'll show up. So when I have 1,000 followers then I'll do this thing. Or when I have 10,000 followers then I'll do this thing. And what we're missing is the whole point of building deep relationships with the people that actually are following you right now. Whether that's one person, a 100 people, 500 people or 5,000 people, those are real people. And what's really, really important is showing up and connecting with them in a true, and honest, and deep way.

And so if any of that resonates with you, if any of that excites you, because you don't have to wait, period, another day, another moment until you have a certain sized business, number of followers, level of revenues or anything else. But you can start showing up right now today in the most authentic way possible, and building amazing relationships, and changing lives. Then you're going to absolutely love this episode. I especially love it.

And heck if you're not even on Instagram or social media, or wish you weren't, this episode's still for you because we talk a lot about that too like honoring yourself, and your gut, and your heart, and what it's telling you. So get ready you all, it is, well, I said it already, I'll say it again, this is a good one. I know you're going to enjoy it. So sit back, maybe get out your notebook, you might want to take a note or two from this great interview with Tyler J. McCall.

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**Tobi:** Hey Tyler, welcome to the Design You podcast. I am thrilled you're here today.

**Tyler:** Well, thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

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**Tobi:** So I want you tell everybody a little bit about you in case they haven't heard of you. You've been all kinds of amazing places. Your work just speaks for itself. You're lauded as an expert by some of my favorite experts like Amy Porterfield and other people. But in case they haven't found you yet, and this is their introduction, will you give everybody just sort of a glimpse into what you do and who you are? And then we're going to get into some really juicy content today.

**Tyler:** Yeah, for sure. Well, I help creative people start and grow profitable online businesses. For the past five years I've been a go to Instagram marketing strategist for online business owners and digital entrepreneurs. It all started back in 2015 when I left my non-profit job that I had done for nearly a decade. I was in the non-profit world and also spent some time doing political and community organizing. And left all of that behind to pursue full-time entrepreneurship, I had no idea what I was getting myself into but I'm so grateful that I did.

And I first started by running a digital marketing agency. I did that for a number of years, eventually specializing in Instagram marketing for local businesses. And then I moved on to start a coaching and consulting business working with creatives, entrepreneurs, start-ups, tech companies, really across the board, restaurants, gift shops, jewelry designers, all different kind of walks of life helping them leverage Instagram for their businesses.

And then in 2017 I launched the Follower to Fan Society which has been my baby for the past over three years now. And inside the Follower to Fan we help online business owners create their own custom and Instagram marketing strategy. That helps them generate more leads, inquiries and sales in a way that is really true and authentic to them, and their business, and their values. We don't teach these kind of plug and play, fill in the blank Instagram marketing strategies, I'm not a fan of those.

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And then in 2020 my team and I launched OBA which is the Online Business Association which is our new thing. We're really excited to bring this into the world and OBA is the first and only professional association for online business owners and digital entrepreneurs.

And our goal is to create a one-stop-shop for coaching, training, resources, community, all in one place for online business owners. That's a diverse, equitable and inclusive space that prioritizes you as a human being first and then you as an entrepreneur. And focuses on how you can be best supported. And then find the most balance as you're starting and growing your online business.

**Tobi:** I want to just reach over and hug you for everything you just said. Because that not only is it so important, I think it's the conversation we should be having. It's the very one we're going to have today, all the things you just said, balance, health, wellness, diversity, inclusion, authenticity, all that stuff. But I think so often, I don't know if it's just the shiny object syndrome or whatever. Even though that's what we want and desire we end up distracted with so much of the other kind of approach to social media, right?

**Tyler:** We do, yeah. I've been saying lately that. I guess a lot of people are learning how to build their business from a fomo perspective of well, I've got to learn this just in case. Or I've got to try this just because maybe it'll work. We're kind of accumulating the social platforms, we accumulate the courses, we accumulate the Facebook groups and the free downloads.

And it's just all like you were saying, Tobi, it's just all distraction because at the end of the day what separates successful entrepreneurs from those that are still struggling. It's folks who just put their blinders on, put their head down and do the work, that's what it is, that's going to make the biggest difference for you.

**Tobi:** Yeah, and that fomo thing kind of gets really close to also the magic pill thing because there's some level of us thinking there's something

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outside of me that I do not know. And let me search a little farther, or with a new person, or a different teacher and maybe they know the thing. And really it's about peeling all – and not that there's not helpful tools and strategies. But it's really about peeling it all back and just having that real conversation is what you're saying.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Tobi:** So let's talk about that because you like to talk a lot about storytelling. When we were chatting before we started you even mentioned some things that really piqued my interest like separating your personal worth from your followers and having deeper relationships. So let's get into that because we are going to for sure talk about politics too in a little bit which is part of this conversation. But before we even go there, the scary for some people, elephant in the room about what should I say and not say.

I'd love for you to just really kind of educate us a little bit more on your philosophy of this personal-ness, the storytelling, these deeper relationships because I think a lot of times we're doing the exact opposite of that on social media with all this surface level stuff. And then we wonder why it doesn't convert to clients, or friends, or contacts, or peers, or any of the things that we're really looking for, right?

**Tyler:** Yeah. And look, at the end of the day, the goal on social media, especially in 2021 is to cut through the noise. There's a lot of noise out there and you're aware of this because you see it all the time. Every time you open up Instagram, every time you're looking on Facebook, wherever it may be you see all the noise that everyone else is doing in your niche, or your industry, or your specific space. And the goal is to cut through that noise. And the only guaranteed way to cut through all the noise is to do the exact opposite of what everyone else is doing.

So this whole idea of zigging when everyone else is zagging, and it's so true on social media, and you have a super power, you may not realize it right now. But you have the super power, no one else has this. And that is

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your personality, your uniqueness, your unique point of view. No one else can copy that. No one else can steal that. I think in particular and a lot of folks that you're serving, Tobi, in the design space, there's a lot of people that are doing things that look really similar.

But at the end of the day your unique point of view is going to be the thing that's always going to help you stand out from the crowd and it's true on Instagram. It's not necessarily about having the best visuals, having the most beautiful stories, you know, used to; it was like having the most exotic destination on your Insta stories. We aren't going anywhere these days, but it's not about that.

**Tobi:** Yeah, that leveled the playing field real quick didn't it? Covid was like all you who looked super fancy; it shut the whole thing down, all of it.

**Tyler:** For sure, yeah.

**Tobi:** We're all in our pajamas, nobody's taking a shower. We haven't left the house.

**Tyler:** Yes. So look, it's not about any of that stuff and it's not even about the follower count. So much of what people do on Instagram is, we spend so much time delaying. Have you found that with your clients, Tobi, they spend so much time thinking?

**Tobi:** Absolutely.

**Tyler:** Well, Tobi, I'll do that. I'll go live as soon as I get to a 1,000 followers or I'll create a content strategy as soon as I start getting more followers on Instagram. Or I'm going to wait, I hate this, I'm going to wait until I get to this many people on my email list before I launch the thing, or before I put it out there. And all that waiting, all that delaying, first of all you're going to keep moving the goalpost because that's just human, that's what we do.

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I think about through my life, I'm a chunky person. I've always been a big person. And I think about how many times in my life did I think when I lose the weight I'll do that.

**Tobi:** Yeah, me too. Me too, yes.

**Tyler:** Well, guess what? It's never going to happen. You know we're never going to get there. So why don't we just start living the life right now and the same is true on Instagram, why don't we just start showing up right now like our true, genuine, authentic self? Don't worry about how many followers you have. And you sure as heck better not worry about how much followers everyone else. This is where the idea of putting your blinders on becomes so important. And I'm a huge Oprah fan boy, are you an Oprah fan?

**Tobi:** Oh my gosh, she's like at the top, at the top, yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah. I love all things Oprah.

**Tobi:** Me too.

**Tyler:** And back when she was winding down the Oprah Winfrey show, when she kicked off her network. They did that whole series, did you ever watch the final season of the Oprah Winfrey Show and that whole special? It was, oh my God, it was incredibly well done. If you haven't seen it, look it up.

**Tobi:** Amazing, yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And she talks in that series about kind of one of her keys to success. And it was actually one of her producers was telling the story of in the 90s, 80s and 90s at the height of the talk show wars, when Donahue was performing well. Oprah was going head to head with Phil Donahue, when Donahue was performing well, and then Sally Jessy Raphael.

**Tobi:** Sally Jessy and her glasses, yeah.

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**Tyler:** Yeah, and then Maury, and then Montel, and then Ricki Lake was on.

**Tobi:** Yes, Geraldo.

**Tyler:** Geraldo, yeah, exactly. I mean the talk show, it was so competitive. And her producers would come in and they would say, “Oh my gosh, Phil just got this person or Sally Jessy just had this person on their show, or Maury just did this storyline, shall we do this? Shall we do that?” She would always say, “No. Why are you paying attention to them? Why are you looking at what they’re doing? Put your blinders on, we’re running our own race. We’re focused on what we are doing.”

And what did she do? She went on to become the most well known talk show personality in the world of all time.

**Tobi:** Yeah, kind of the most well known human in the world in some ways, in a lot of ways, right? Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And she’s built this empire because she was running Oprah Winfrey’s race, not Phil Donahue’s race, not Ricki Lake’s race. She was running Oprah’s race. And that meant she put her blinders on and she focused on serving her people with the content that she wanted to talk about. And if you’re listening to this then this conversation’s really meant for you because I’m sure you’re finding yourself in a moment where it’s really easy to look side to side and see what all your competitors or peers are doing.

And you end up judging yourself based on their success. You end up thinking you don’t have enough because of how much they have. We start thinking that there’s not enough to go around because of the whole success that they are accomplishing. And you can’t operate a business of immense value and of a lot of joy from that place of judgment and negativity about what everyone else is doing and what everyone else.

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So that's why it's so important you focus on the followers you have right now. You focus on the changes that you can make right now day-to-day on Instagram to connect with your people better. And you really focus on creating great content that connects with the right person and creates a conversation so you can build a community.

And if you just focus on that I guarantee you, I'll put money down on it that you're going to grow your following. You're going to grow your business. You're going to grow your presence in the world because at the end of the day all business is person to person. There's another person on the other end of that phone, they're reading your words. They're watching your stories. They're hearing what you have to say. Focus on her, focus on serving him, focus on connecting with them and more of those people are going to come, that's what makes the biggest difference.

**Tobi:** I love that so much. Yeah, there's a couple of things I want to speak to, or have you maybe go even go a little deeper on. But I love this concept of speaking to the audience you have right now because I think so often we have these real human beings, they're not numbers. They're not just followers, they're real human beings and we're kind of forgetting they're even there because we're looking down the road to when there's – how does having 900 more of something make the one you have less valuable?

It doesn't, in fact it makes it even harder to connect with them sometimes I think. So I love what you're saying about focusing on the people that are right there already listening to you that you're kind of discounting. But what I was thinking about when you were speaking and you said, "When I weigh this I'll show up", or whatever, which I mean that's – I feel like Oprah and I are twinsies of how many times we lost the same 20 pounds, 30 pounds or whatever. In coronavirus I found the 20 pounds again, all the things.

But where I find myself right now and I'd love to know if you're feeling the same way because I think it's so important to what you're saying. I think it's not even just about showing up with our point of view for our audience. I

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think it's being honest with ourselves about what our point of view really is. Don't you think, not only we're trying to be the perfect presentation to the world of who we want them to be?

A lot of times we're actually living that just with ourselves and holding ourselves to the standards of things we don't even like, or want, or that we're the things we really care about that we're talking about behind closed doors whether that's politics, or health, or anything. We're not talking about, we're afraid to talk about.

And I find myself right now in January of 2021, I sold my Peloton when everybody I know loves them because I'm like, "I hate that damn thing. Get it out of here." I just actually quit the gym or I'm taking a break right now even though I love my trainers. But I'm finding myself not wanting to show up and I'm at a whole new level of honesty with myself of just be true to what your heart's telling you, your gut's telling you and just honor that.

And it's so interesting, and the only reason I wouldn't is because some level of what somebody thinks I should do, she's going to not be thin enough, like this narrative. And so I'm so enjoying this truth telling to myself. And I feel like by telling myself this level of truth and honesty, it's going to make it all be it, scary but easier to know exactly what my truth should be in the online space because they're one and the same for me now, which I think we used to think there's the public acceptable version of us and then there is this other real version of us.

So what do you think about that concept and are you feeling the same way?

**Tyler:** Well, I can say for my Southern Baptist upbringing, that was a word, you took us to church with that. It's so true. Look, Tobi, I think look, 2020 was a dumpster fire, we can all agree. It was a horrible, terrible, awful year. And people experienced some of the worst moments of their lives, immense loss, so much tragedy. And at the same time I would just pray

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that if you've made it to this point in 2021 which you and I are recording this after the first week of 2021, which was like another year and a week.

**Tobi:** Yes. A whole other dumpster fire and I mean like train wreck, yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah. If you've made it to this point I would just pray, I would hope to God that you have made it to this point with just asking yourself the questions you're asking Tobi, of like, why am I doing this? By the fall of 2020 I was just sitting here in my house, and a beautiful house filled with beautiful things, with my beautiful husband, living a beautiful life just thinking why the hell am I doing this? What is the goal? What is the end goal? What are we working toward? Why do I spend my day doing this?

Because if I'm not clear on that, if I don't know why I'm doing it and if it's not mine, if it's not my thing, my why, then why am I going to waste my time doing it? Life is so short, time is so valuable. We can't make more of it. We only have the time that we have. And I think about that all the time and getting really clear on why I'm doing what I'm doing.

And even with Instagram, if you think about it and you're like I don't want to be on Instagram, then don't be on Instagram. You can build a profitable successful business helping people without Instagram. People do it every single day. And you get to decide if that's why you want to be doing what you're doing. And it was funny you mentioned that because just before our call I was having lunch and I was scrolling Instagram. I was doing a little bit of doom scrolling on Twitter and then scrolling on Instagram.

And I saw an entrepreneur who I know, I've spoken on panels with her, she's an incredibly smart, successful entrepreneur, post on her stories that she was hiring. And I went and looked at, I always look at other people's job postings, I think it's so interesting. I think it tells a lot about their company and I want to steal ideas. So I was looking at her job postings and they started with the sentence of, 'In 2020 we made nine million dollars and in 2021 we're going to make more. We're looking for people to join our team who get that, who are onboard with that idea', and all of that.

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And I thought – my first thought was nine million dollars, that's a lot of money. And then my second thought was the nine million dollars isn't that much money when you think about it in the grand scheme of things. And then my third thought was I want to make nine million dollars. And then my fourth thought was, but do I really want to make nine million dollars? Can we just have that internal dialog?

And then I looked at the position she was hiring, one of those of a personal assistant. And I was reading the job posting and all the things that she wants this personal assistant to do. And I was like, wow, that sounds cool having someone do this, and that, and all that. And this was as I was putting my gluten free chicken tenders and Sweet Potato Tater Tots in the toaster oven for lunch. And I thought wow wouldn't that be cool to have someone do all that for me?

And then I asked myself, do I really want someone to do all of that for me? I think just you all, stay in that place of asking these questions like do I really want that? What does that really look like? I always think when people are like, "I outsource everything in my home. I don't go to the grocery store. I don't do anything so I can focus on my business." I always think what a miserable existence. Going to Target or going to the grocery store is such a joy for me. I don't want to give that up. For them, they hate it. They never want to do it so they would rather have someone else do it.

And guess what? We're both right, that's the coolest thing. We can both be right about that.

**Tobi:** Yeah. Well, and I think you're – yes, I love what you're saying and I relate so much because I've been having the same conversation. And I know I'm a powerful person, I make big things happen, I think big thoughts, depending on which personality or type test you look at, I'm Enneagram 8, I'm the super driven one, all that stuff. And right now I'm in a place of just kind of like you're saying, asking those questions and going why do I need to make 10 million dollars or a 100 million dollars?

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What if I just make two, what if I just consistently made two million, have the exact salary and life I wanted and helped a shit ton of people and was real happy about it. That's perfect if that's what I – and then next year if I decide, okay, I do want 10, fine. But I think that we do, we set these goals and these markers. And again if it's let's get to 10,000 people on Instagram or a 100,000 people. And we don't even really know why. And to your point, what it's going to cost us not just financially but emotionally, and in time, and effort, and everything to get what we say we want.

And so when we haven't really thought it through, like you're saying, I find us beating ourselves up or weaponizing those goals against ourselves of well, I still don't have 10,000 followers on Instagram. When we don't even really know why we want it and what it was going to be different when we had that other than the swipe up feature or whatever. And why does that matter to us and how are we really impacting people? And I love exactly what you're saying.

So when we're looking at that, when we're looking at truth and honesty in ourselves, what we want, our why, the number of followers, then how do we start to have those deeper conversations with people, is it that we have to practice being more vulnerable and honest in the way we share? And what's the difference between that and we're kind of all afraid to over-share? And I think there's a whole new sort of set of rules about that now being real is more what I think people are looking for, even though you're going to lose people for that.

You may lose a whole lot of people when you get real. And that's not a bad thing, so will you help us know a little bit more about how we should show up that way?

**Tyler:** For sure, yeah. So the first thing I always like to share is this illustration of a magnet. So I'm sure if you're listening to this you may have kind of a memory or maybe I'm just a nerd. Well, I am a nerd. But you may have a memory of sometime in your child. I remember having – I don't

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know what it was. I don't know if it was from a science set or some kind of thing that my brother and I had, that had these little magnets in it. It had the little, the round magnet and they had the little stick magnets.

And what we know about magnets is that they attract and they stick to one another and then if you turn them the other way they push away, they repel. And I think a lot of people spend way too much time focusing on how to magnetize people to them and how to grow their audience without understanding that to magnetize you must also push away. To connect people with you and your brand in a deeper meaningful way, you must also turn people off and push them away and let them know this brand is not for you.

And we've made a grave mistake in digital entrepreneurship and creative business ownership where we have said yes to everyone, where we have said, "Yeah, this is for you. Yeah, totally, this will work for you. Yeah, of course I want you to be part of my community." And we've confused the pursuit of maybe inclusion or being open to everyone, we've confused that with the need to be specific about who we serve. And the ability to speak out and be ourselves truly and honestly online in such a way that it pushes people away.

So what's really important is that you get clear on what you want to share with the world that is true, and honest, and authentic to you, that's not contrived or made up, that's truly you. And then you understand what benefit or value that provides to your audience. This is where we ensure we're not over-sharing, where we're not doing it just for the sake of saying, "Well, I'm being vulnerable."

Well, if it's not of value to your people, if there's not a lesson for them to learn, if there's not something for them to be inspired by, if there's not a challenge for them to accept so that they can be better at whatever it is that they do, then it's not really of value. So getting clear on the value it brings to those people and then we share it.

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Another thing that you can do and this is something we help our clients with is a concept we call shared experiences. So we all have these in our business. We have things that we generally as a human being are interested in, value that we do that we participate in, that our audience also does, or values, or participates in. And we can create content around those ideas and they can be completely unrelated to our product or service.

So the example for me is talking about Target. I legitimately love shopping in Target. Tobi, you can look over my head as we're doing this, that's from Target, that's from Target. Everything in my office is from Target. And my ideal client, she's a mom, typically in her late 20s to early 50s. And I don't want to stereotype or generalize. If you are listening, I know you are, but yeah, I love Target, it's just the nature of it. So when I talk about my love of Target it has nothing to do with what I teach on Instagram.

I don't try and make it hokey and corny, and talk about the Instagram lessons you can learn from Target. I could do that but I don't, I just talk about generally loving Target and going to Target. My audience knows that about me. They love Target. It's a connection point, it's a shared experience.

And what I find time and time again, and what our clients find is if you can get your audience talking to you about shared experiences that have nothing to do with your product or service. They create a genuine easy jumping off point to start a conversation to take down that barrier, to start having a dialog with you via a direct message on Instagram.

So that then one day when you do post on stories about your new opt-in, or you new freebie, or your webinar, or your course, or you have an opening for your service, whatever it may be, people are going to send you a message, because they've talked to you about Target before. And we all have these things. It could be fitness. It could be parenting. It could be food. It could be travel, any of those things. And it's just things that are generally interesting to you.

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**Tobi:** And believing that whatever yours are interesting enough, because I think what I find people do is discount their own interest. It's like people would think that was dumb, or why do they care, or like Tyler said, that has not value. But in this context you're saying just clearly if you're interested in it, it's valid. If it's something that you think about and spend time doing then just talk about it and make it just natural and as if you were talking to your mom or your best friend sitting across the room with a glass of wine or whatever, right?

**Tyler:** Yeah. I mean I have friends in this online business space who are coaches, consultants, who have courses and products, all about marketing and business and all these things. And they talk about things like baking, or real housewives, or celery juice, or their fitness routine, or lessons they're learning from parenting, or their journey with becoming a parent, their journey with IVF, or infertility. Or all these different things that they're talking about on Instagram that have nothing to do with their product or service, but it's creating connections, it's creating conversation, it's just these entry points.

And again this is the goal of building a community of people who are coming together around kind of a shared mission, or vision, or values. That's how we build community, that's how we build relationships with each other. We do it in real life all the time. I mean think about the last time you went to a dinner party, or the last time you met – I mean we don't do this in person these days, but the last time you did it. And what were the things you talked about? There was probably the annoying like, "What do you do for work?"

And then if you're like me and Tobi you're like, oh God, let me figure out how to explain this to you because you're not going to get it. But then you go into the like, "Well, do you have kids? How old are they? Where do you go to church? Do you go to a gym?"

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**Tobi:** Where do they go to school? Yeah. That's a cute bag, where did you get that? Yeah, all that stuff, yeah. I love it.

**Tyler:** Yeah, you can do the same thing on Instagram.

**Tobi:** Yeah, so good. Okay so let's talk about political things and being political because this is something that I've been so inspired by you across your social media platforms. And I feel like I know you so much better because you have been so transparent about this. And I'll say my own sort of experience or journey with this looked like a woman who was always – I felt exactly how I feel currently, nothing changed necessarily about how I was showing up in my own life with my politics, how I was voting.

But I for whatever reason was sitting in, like a lot of white southern women, sitting there in my privilege just not talking about this. Some level of belief that, you know, don't talk about politics, or religion, or anything like that was kind of there in my belief system. And when I did kind of want to talk about stuff, the thing that would come to mind was I don't want to cause trouble for my mother and her sisters who are super conservative on one side, and we're liberal. There was always a reason why it just felt more comfortable not to talk about this.

And then we hit 2020 and I knew at the gut level, I absolutely cannot be quiet about this anymore. And then even learned how had I been quiet about it for so long. And I've been on this path now for what, 6, 8, 10 months of showing up completely differently. And I haven't really been that scared about it. It's been interesting.

I would say there are some moments where – when I first posted the very first post about social justice, and racial issues, and everything back around George Floyd. I will say I felt very committed but probably a little bit like wow, this is about to be – let's see what's about to happen here. This is a little scary. But I think that you have done it beautifully and you even have a philosophy that you absolutely cannot keep this politics separate from your business.

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And like me I'm sure you've gotten many of those comments from people that are like, "I'm just here for the decorating. You need to keep your politics out of this. I just want to see pretty things for you." Kind of try to put me in my place which I refuse to stay in. But I love how you, and I want you to share with my audience how you believe that it's absolutely not an option to not integrate politics into your business because it's part of who we are. So can you share your experience and talk to us about this?

**Tyler:** Yeah. So I have always been very politically minded. I was the kid in school who was very excited about the mock vote going all the way back to middle school. I was always the black sheep of the family. I never agreed with anyone. So I was always the liberal that would one day grow up and then once I grew up and started paying my own taxes then things will change, is what my dad always used to say.

**Tobi:** Exactly, I've heard that too.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And I'm like, "Well I do pay taxes, also I pay more taxes than you probably ever paid." And I'm still liberal. I'd like to pay more please.

**Tobi:** Me too. That's what I tell my husband every day. He's like, "Are we sure we're good with this tax increase?" And I'm like, "Yes, we are. Keep going buddy, go vote."

**Tyler:** Yeah. So look, I've always been politically minded. I was a political and community organizer for a number of years. But I've found myself for the past few years in business not talking about politics. And there's a multitude of reasons that I could find, excuses I can make. I think a part of it for me is that I have been out loudly as a queer man professionally since I entered into online entrepreneurship. So I kind of always thought well, people know where I stand. I'm a gay guy, they definitely know. Well, that's not really true.

And then I thought well, my past kind of speaks for itself, my history and what I've done in the past speaks for itself. But what I quickly learned is

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that, a couple of things. First of all I became so focused on growing my business and so focused on I need to make more money and grow my presence, and get more of this, and get more of that, and grow a team and all of that. That I realized I wasn't doing it from a place of rooted in values and clarity around what I'm actually trying to do, like what the cause is for my business, the change I'm working to create in the world.

I had a really great conversation recently with Erica Courdae who's one of my favorite go-to diversity, equity and inclusion experts about this on my podcast for an episode we're doing. And she talked about how when businesses exist without clear values, and not just values that – these are our values and we put them on paper on a wall. But values that are action words that you can live out. Then businesses create immense harm and trauma in the world a lot of times without realizing it.

The example that we use in the episode is talking about Amazon, how Amazon is creating immense harm in the world because there's not this clear values platform for what they're doing. And they try and kind of parade out values and causes here and there. But that's not the thing that ties the whole business together. If you're not clear on the ethical implications of what Amazon does just take a quick Google, you'll find the ways that they're doing that.

So I was similar in my business, I wasn't really clear on my values and how I lived those values in my work, so since I wasn't clear on it, it wasn't intentional, and it never happened. And we all know if we're not clear on things in our business they don't happen. If we don't have a clear content plan we're never going to write that blog post or record that podcast. If we don't have a clear plan to launch our new service or offer then we're never going to do it. If we don't have a clear plan for when we're going to hire that next person, we're never going to get around to hiring them.

So the same is true for me in my values in my business. So when George Floyd was murdered in 2020 and this reckoning came about on social

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media especially in the online business and influencer, and digital entrepreneur space I realized that I had something to say. And I had a conversation I wanted to be a part of. And I was coming into the conversation far too late. I should have been talking about this long before I got to the point to where I was talking about it publicly.

I had little posts and had said things here and there, but I had not been speaking out as much as I should have. And on the other side, Tobi, the painful part of this was the realization is not only had I not been speaking out, but I hadn't been living into my business. The events I'd hosted for the past, the two years before that, the stages were filled with all white speakers. The testimonials I put on my website were all white people or white passing people. The people I had been featuring on my platforms were all typically cisgender, heterosexual white folks and I had done all of that.

So the first thing for us to do is to realize when we've screwed up and when we could have done better and to not judge ourselves for it. To say, "Well, you know what? I messed that up, now that I know." When you know better you do better. "Now that I know I'm going to do something about it." And for me that came through just talking about it loudly and openly. Did I piss people off? Yeah, I totally did.

Did people get annoyed and leave, and unsubscribe, and unfollow, and ask for their money back? Of course they did. What did I do? I said, "Bye", and gave them their money back, see you later. I don't mind, go get, I don't want you here. My favorite is when people, they let you know they're going to unfollow and you're like, "Sweetie, this isn't an airport, you don't have to announce your departure. We don't need to know, you can just go."

But what it really boiled down to and I've talked about this a lot over the past year is my belief that entrepreneurship is political for two key reasons. The first reason is that if you are a person of any marginalized, historically marginalized group, so that means if you are a Black person, indigenous

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person, person of color. If you're a part of the LGBTQIA community, if you're a person living with a disability, either a mental or a physical disability, if you are a woman.

If you're part of a historically marginalized group then the fact that you determine your own financial security and success is political. Because your ability to own and operate a business on your own is a relatively new concept in this country, that just a few decades ago, based on the color of your skin or your gender identity, your sexual orientation, being able to run a business, to get a business loan, to secure a line of credit, you wouldn't have been able to do it.

It wasn't until recent history that women could get a bank account in their own name without their husband or father as the primary name on the account. So the fact that you are creating your own financial security, that you are operating your own business, it's an inherently political act. The other side of this is that whenever people say, "Business isn't political, or keep politics out of business", there are moments in our history where if it were not for politics there would be continued immense abuse and ethical immoral issues with business.

So the 40 hour work week, child labor laws, overtime laws, workers compensation insurance, all of those things are political. And it's because of the political process that we have created a somewhat more equitable workplace. Now in the US in particular we have immense issues with work. And we do not do enough to protect the rights of workers. We do not do enough to ensure fair pay for fair work or any of those things in this country.

However there's few steps that have been taken in the past century have been on a political level and politics has had to intervene in capitalism, in commerce, in business, to ensure that business is doing what it should be doing, to ensure the health and safety of Americans. So business is political, there's no way around it. And I think it's really important that we think about that, that we talk about it.

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And that we don't forget that building a presence online is an incredible privilege that we have, whether it's for 10 followers or 10,000 followers. And that it comes with responsibility. It comes with the responsibility to serve those people well with high value content, to be kind and caring to those people. Remembering there's another human behind that screen as you were saying earlier, they're not just a number. And that those people need to, they need to hear where you stand on things.

I mean I'm at a point now Tobi, where it's like if you haven't said anything you are not getting my money. I'm sorry.

**Tobi:** Right, yes. Well, and I can relate so much to what you said and very much, same thing, had been quiet, I can come up with all the reasons but they're no different than yours, exactly the same kind of thing and that kind of belief of well, people know me. I worked on the Clinton campaign. I'm from Arkansas, whatever. I've always been a liberal. I've always been a democrat. People know this stuff about me, whatever. They don't, they don't know this about you.

And so what a lot of people that were following me thought was she's a white southern Christian woman. And they would have put me in the exact opposite category or camp than what I feel I show up as. And I had so many people, as many people as I had say to me, "Shut up and stick to decorating", I had come to me and say, I mean I can't tell you not only how surprised, but how refreshing it is to hear this. And I have to rethink some things that I thought about you.

Because I even had one of my employees who's not a Christian, doesn't practice religion in any way. And she said, "Well, I knew you were one and that you go to church on Sunday so I just assumed you were probably for the other candidate." And just some of those moments opened my eyes so much to see what we're not saying speaks volumes about us and it sends the wrong message.

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And the other thing I was thinking when you were talking is not only is this part of your value system that I think is really important, for those of us who do fall into any of the categories that have more privilege, white, cisgender, any of that stuff, that affords sort of this privilege to sit and be quiet. It's so easy to not even know what's happening in the world and just how a lot of us run businesses but don't know about our finances or don't know really, we ignore parts of our business.

To me now seeing how before I spoke out it was so easy at times to just be like I'm just so over politics. And I'm over politicians and that just feels toxic to me. And I just didn't participate, even though I had always been like you, very politically minded. And now because I am showing up in this way I feel like it's causing me to have more of a sense of obligation to know what is going on and to know where I stand. Do you feel that same way?

It's making me interested at a whole other level, not just to be on one side or the other but like you said, how does this impact me? How does this impact my followers? How does this impact the people that I'm helping? I need to be educated and aware, and decide what my point of view is here.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And look, it is, being able to say something, like I don't watch the news or I don't worry about politics. I believe that comes from a place of immense privilege, that if you can move through life without care or concern for what's happening on a political, or social, or societal level in the world, because it doesn't affect you. It's the proof of the fact that you have privilege that you can continue through life.

I mean I have lived in so much fear leading up until the November election because Tobi, I had no idea if Donald Trump was reelected, what would that mean for me and my husband? What would that mean for our ability, I mean in the very early days of his administration, Donald Trump stripped away so many protections for transgender Americans. And was working on eroding so much of the work that the Obama Administration had done to

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protect trans people. And I just thought as a man married to a man, we're going to be next.

Are we going to reach a point where the Supreme Court is going to decide in a case that hospitals based on religious belief can turn away a same sex partner because it's against their belief as an institution. And then my husband and I are going to be driving in the middle of nowhere or Georgia, going to Florida to visit his family, get in a car wreck and I'm going to be in the hospital and they're going to turn him away at the door because they don't recognize our marriage. What if something like that were to happen?

And if you can kind of move through life without worrying about those things, that's just proof of your privilege. The other side of this, it's so important and I love what you said about, I want to know what's going on in the world, not just for me but for my employees, for my clients, for my community. Is that if you are going to sit here and take money from Black folks, from gay folks, from Jewish folks, from people who are Muslim.

If you're going to sit here and take those dollars from those people and yet not concern yourself with the safety and wellbeing of those people then you need to stop taking their money. That's what it is.

And really I hit this moment at the end of 2020 when I was kind of talking about this, and in particular about some well known experts in the online business space who have taken Black dollars. Who took my gay dollars for years, one of these experts, I have given this person over \$50,000 and helped them generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in their business through affiliate partnerships and building their own business.

Yet behind the scenes in quiet, in secret, they were a Trump supporter. They were trading in all of these outright QAnon conspiracy theories. They were talking about how being on social media at the height of the racial justice protests in the summer of 2020 was just too negative. They were a Covid denier.

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Doing all these things behind the scene, they wouldn't say it publicly. They wouldn't say it out loud because they knew it would cost them everything. But they would still take my gay dollars every single day of the week. And that's what's really important here. If you're going to take money from people, if you want to work with people who are from diverse backgrounds, who are from historically marginalized communities, then you sure as hell better care about them and what's happening in their world and speak out on their behalf.

**Tobi:** I love this so much and I want to ask one more question before we wrap up because I've just been dying to have this conversation. And I think you're the perfect person to talk to about this because every person that listens to me is not perfectly aligned with my political views. Every person in my Design You coaching community is not. And they don't have to be, although a lot of the conversation I have does bump up against their belief system as well and it can cause some tension.

So when I do think about my friends, or family, or people I know that are on the more conservative side of politics that are not even necessarily a Trump supporter, but some of them are. It's easy for me I think in some ways to say, "Well, you have to be public about what you believe." But I'm also saying that a little bit from – I don't know if it's arrogant. But almost believing I'm on the right side of this. I'm on the right side of history. I'm on the right side of this issue. I'm on the side for people, I care about people, I'm about diversity, all of that, which is all true.

So what does it look like for people who aren't for those things, I mean if they're just quiet, it's going to speak volumes anyway because we've come to a moment in history I think where you either say what you're for or people are going to decide it for you. And we're going to decide you're on the other side. But what would that look like in 2021? Is it somebody saying, "I do refuse business to gay people, I do refuse business to Black people, I am not about diversity?"

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I've wondered, can a business exist, and I mean of course they can, if their audience is like them, but what does that look like? Because it's a little hard for me to grasp that because it's on the other side of where I am, have you thought about that, what that would look like? Some issues are human rights issues, some issues are more, you know, are less political and more just human rights, but it's still all – it's all pretty political, right?

**Tyler:** For sure, yeah. When I think the reality is we live in a high politicized world. I mean the fact that coronavirus was politicized, I mean a global pandemic that's killed hundreds of thousands, infected millions of people around the globe has been politicized. I think that's a little bit of the speaking to kind of the cancerous nature of politics in our world and in the US. But look, I think about it in three ways. I think there are opinions, there's politics and then there's human rights.

An opinion is that I don't like pineapple on pizza, which I think is a wrong opinion but some people, it's their opinion, pineapple on pizza is delicious.

**Tobi:** Yeah, it's not my favorite.

**Tyler:** Yeah, but I love, but we're not going to feud over it.

**Tobi:** Right, how dare you.

**Tyler:** Don't publish this podcast, Tobi, because you don't like pineapple on pizza, how dare you. So there's opinions. There's politics, to me, politics is political conversations about taxation, about zoning, about...

**Tobi:** Schools.

**Tyler:** Schools, yes, about roads, about issues related to foreign relations, about issues related to defense and war and those types. I mean there are so many political debates we could be having about how the US is the only country in the world that has soldier boots on the ground in all these countries around the world. Why do we do that? Why do we have all these military bases? What does that mean? Let's talk about imperialism. Let's

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talk about colonialism. We could have all those conversations. That's political.

And then there's human rights and I think that's where we have to be okay with right and wrong. People aren't comfortable with it and you may be cringing a little bit listening. But we have to be okay with right and wrong. I believe that Black Lives Matter, end of sentence all in caps BLM.

**Tobi:** Yes, me too, 100%.

**Tyler:** Give me the sign, I'll go and march.

**Tobi:** The t-shirt, the hat, the whole thing, all of it, yes.

**Tyler:** Everything, yes. And if you cannot agree with that then I believe you are on the wrong side of history. I don't believe you as a human are wrong. I think you need to do some soul searching if you're a person, you know, if you're a person of faith, you need to really do some searching in your book and with your creator and figure out why you can't say that or why you can't understand that. But I believe you're on the wrong side of history.

If you believe any of these conspiracy theories that are rooted in anti-Semitism by the way, virtually every conspiracy theory is rooted in the hatred of Jewish people. If you believe those things I believe you're on the wrong side of history. If you believe that people shouldn't be allowed to legally marry the person that they love or that someone shouldn't be allowed to better understand and explain how they identify in terms of their gender, I believe that you're on the wrong side of history. I believe those things are human rights issues. And you're not going to change my mind on it.

**Tobi:** And I may not change yours probably either but, yeah.

**Tyler:** Exactly. And if that means that you cannot in good conscience give me your money then I don't want it, that's fine. If that's going to be – if we can't align on that values basis then you're probably not a good fit for me

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as a customer. And if I know those things about you then I'm not going to give you my money and that's okay too. You're not going to get that exchange from me and I think that's okay. But that's how I like to think about it, opinions versus politics, versus human rights and that's what it really comes down to for me.

**Tobi:** Yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me. So anybody listening deciding whether they are on the same side of politics and opinions as you and me or the opposite. That's just kind of how they can go through and think about their own lives, their own businesses and where they stand and how they're going to show up. Do you believe – last question, I promise. But do you believe, because I do, that we've hit a point in time where we're for sure not going backwards but in the future we're going to be so much more clear on where businesses do stand about their politics?

And again if they're saying nothing it's saying a lot, but do you feel that we've come to this place kind of in social media, and in business, and a world where from here forward we are going to know more about people's values than ever?

**Tyler:** I would hope so and I think as small business owners we can ensure that in a small business. Will the multinational corporate machines that run our world that allow you and I to do the work that we do, will the Facebooks and the Googles, and the Hilton Hotels of the world get to that point? One of my daily mental practices these days is navigating my understanding and opinion of capitalism.

**Tobi:** Right. Me too.

**Tyler:** The modern world, it's like a consistent, and for some people that is so triggering to hear that we say that we think it, because for some people it's so automatic, capitalism, good. I'm like, well, is it? Let's get clear, maybe...

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**Tobi:** For whom? It's good for the privileged, and it's not good for a whole lot of other people. And there's all kinds of, like there's the whole scale of, you know, all the way from what people want to say is socialism, or communism, democratic, socialist, all the way over to capitalism. And are we even calling things the same thing, and apples to oranges? That's a whole deep conversation, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. So I really worry that kind of how capitalism exists in the US. And because money is so entangled with politics and corporate identity and cases that have said that corporations can be viewed as entities, the same as a human being. I think there's a lot of untangling to do there. I don't know if that will get fixed in our lifetimes. But I think small businesses, solopreneurs, entrepreneurs, folks like you and I doing what we do.

I mean now's the best time to get really clear on what you stand for, speak about it loudly in a way that feels right for you and that is of service to your community. And I think a great place to start for people Tobi, is if you're not ready to post about it on Instagram, first of all ask yourself why you're not. Is it because you're worried you're going to mess up? Well, guess what my friend? You're going to mess up. I mess up. Tobi messes up. We all do, we stumble daily, that's part of the human condition is messing up.

But there are lots of things you've done in your business that you've messed up on and you still did them, like sending out the wrong email to the wrong list, sending the wrong client the wrong invoice. Or ordering the wrong curtains for the wrong customer, whatever it may be.

**Tobi:** Totally, yeah, all of that.

**Tyler:** And guess what? You're still here. You figured it out, you ate the cost.

**Tobi:** You learn from it a whole lot, yeah.

**Tyler:** Exactly, yeah. And you're still fine. You're still okay. So if you're not talking about it because you're worried you're going to mess up, just know

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you're going to mess up, and do it anyway. If you feel like you don't have the words to say there are some incredible people out there, incredible diversity, equity and inclusion experts, incredible influencers that you can learn from, that you can follow, that can help you find the right words.

But I'll tell you right now, the easiest place to start is with your customers and clients, the people who are already on your roster, who are already in your phonebook to call this week, the people that you're already connected with. Check in with them, have the conversation with them.

If you have customers and clients who are Black, who are Jewish, who are LGBTQIA, who are immigrants, any of these historically marginalized groups, just see how they're doing, broach the conversation with them because those are the people who you can start having the conversation with. If you have employees and you have team members, have the conversation with them. As the leader of your company you have to set this from the top down. It has to be from the top down.

**Tobi:** Yes. And I think making sure too that people know that just because you're voicing where you stand on something does not mean that you are always arguing with people, you may if that's your style, if that's your personality type. It doesn't mean you're always disparaging the other group. I'm one who I don't really like to get in the – not that I care when other people do, I want everybody to do what's right for them. But I'm not going to usually be calling out specific things. In my own house I might be cursing about, about Donald Trump or anybody else.

I'm not on my social media constantly talking about Trump. I don't want to be talking about Trump all the time. But I am talking about where I stand on policies, and issues, and things that are happening in the world. And of course because he's our president, a lot of those do involve him. But that's just my style personally. But I'm in general a positive, optimistic person and I like to look for solutions.

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I'm not one that likes to focus on a lot of the individual negative things that are happening because that feels real toxic to me. So again, I'm not ignoring them. Maybe that in itself is some level of privilege. But I show up in the context of this conversation as how I would show up myself, very authentic to me. And I think that's what you're saying. We have to decide what would Tobi talking about this issue look like? What would Tyler talking about this issue look like? And it's going to look different for a lot of different people. And it's not that any of them are right or wrong.

But also knowing we're going to gravitate to some people that probably show up in a way that's more of our preference possibly. And we're maybe not going to be listening to people that are showing up in another way. And again, all of those are on that sort of scale. There's a million different ways to show up and have these conversations.

**Tyler:** For sure, yeah. And I think as long as you're going at it with this kind of what we talked about earlier in this episode of just asking yourself, why am I more inclined to listen to him than her? Or why am I more inclined to accept this point of view than this point of view? Or do I really believe this? For me, growing up in the Christian faith, and growing up as a Southern Baptist which I no longer identify with those faith traditions. It's a lot of unpacking. It's a lot like what did I learn about this? Is this really true for me today? Do I still think the same way?

And for, you know, I don't know if you experience this or folks listening, as you start doing the work of really creating an antiracist business and living life as an antiracist and unpacking your own racism, growing up in the south you all, it does a number on you. There's a lot of stuff you have to unlearn and process. And it takes time. This is centuries of programming, lifetimes of beliefs and ideas that you are really subject to.

**Tobi:** Yeah, or internalize that we don't even know were there so often, yeah. Well, thank you so much. This is – I have just been waiting for this conversation with you. It's such a pleasure, and an honor, and a joy to be

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with you today. It was so fun for me to hear, I mean fun's not even the right word. It was fun. But it was important to me and I just, I thank you for being here and for sharing not only with me but my audience.

I think these are such important topics. Everything from our personal worth is not our follower account. And how we bring every bit of ourselves, including our politics to the table, I think are the questions that people are grappling with most right now and how they show up. And nobody better than you to get us on the right path, so thank you.

**Tyler:** Well, thanks for having me, I appreciate it.

**Tobi:** It's so much fun.

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So yeah, a lot of truth telling in that episode itself. And as Tyler said a couple of times, some of you may be frustrated when you hear conversations like this from me. Some of you maybe even downright mad or think Tobi's not the person for me anymore. And that's totally okay. But in this conversation we cause you to look deeper at yourself, and your beliefs, and your point of view and why you're connecting with any business, whether it's me or somebody else, then I think we totally did our job.

We did what we came here to do which was get you to look at how you're showing up, who you're giving your money to, who you're letting give money to you, how you're connecting with those people. And that my friends, I think is the number one most important thing for you to take away from this episode and to really look at, maybe even put under a microscope for your business, so another great but hard, sometimes hard conversation. You can always expect me to bring the truth and to bring guests who bring the truth and I think Tyler did just that.

So again my huge thanks to Tyler, I didn't even – I was so into the conversation I forgot to even tell you where to find him. But trust me, he is

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the Instagram guy, so you can totally find him on Instagram at Tyler J. McCall, on Facebook at Tyler J. McCall. He mentioned a lot of his offerings and programs. And you can find all of those things in our show notes. But the Online Business Association, I'll tell you again is he said his newest baby, Follower to Fan Society is one of his programs, free Instagram roadmap.

He has all of these things; you can get his free Instagram roadmap at [tylerjmccall.com/roadmap](http://tylerjmccall.com/roadmap). So check him out, all things Tyler J. McCall are of tremendous value. And please go find him and let him know what you thought about this episode out on Instagram because you know he'll be there waiting and ready to have a conversation with you.

Okay. That's what we've got for you today. I can't wait to see you here next week. Bye for now friends.

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](http://TobiFairley.com).