

Ep #257: Cutting the BS in Your Business with Maggie Patterson



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 257.

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, how are you today? Are you ready to talk about marketing? I hope so. Today we're talking about marketing but maybe in a different way than you've heard marketing talked about before. I have an interview today, a conversation with Maggie Patterson. And Maggie and I have kind of been getting to know each other in the online space in the DMs but it was so fun to actually meet her on Zoom and have her come onto the podcast.

She has two decades of experience working with client services. And she's been a successful entrepreneur herself for over 15 years. So she has a business, a podcast, an active, very active online presence on Instagram and she's really all about cutting through the BS of business, cutting through the BS of marketing, cutting through the BS in the online business world and helping people really know what authentic honest businesses and honest marketing can look like.

So she has really been thriving, not only with her own podcast which we talk about on the show but a separate podcast she does with a friend, Dr. Michelle Mazur and they have a podcast called *Duped* where they really shine a light on a lot of the kind of icky stuff that goes on in the online marketing world. So I hope you enjoy this episode. It might shine a light on some things for you and some of the gurus and people you've learned marketing from.

And we don't really mean to do some of these tactics ourselves, it's just we learn from the 'experts'. And this is the way they teach us to show up. So, Maggie's on a mission to help cut through that, to help us do things in a

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more honest way, to help put the customer first so that they aren't taken advantage of. And so we can just feel really good and authentic about the way we do business with other people. So enjoy this podcast with Maggie Patterson.

Tobi: Hey, Maggie, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm really excited to have this conversation with you today.

Maggie: Thank you so much for having me, Tobi. We are going to talk about all my favorite, well, not really my favorite things but things I love to talk about.

Tobi: Yeah, that's a good clarification there. So I guess it's your favorite things when it comes to your work but not necessarily your favorite because there's some kind of icky things we're going to get into a little bit today probably.

Maggie: Yeah, there's definitely soon to be some icky things but I'm on a mission to help you all get away from the icky things.

Tobi: Perfect, so why don't you, in case people haven't heard you, found you, found both of your fabulous podcasts or you on Instagram, why don't you give people a little bit of insight of who you are and what you do. And then we're going to get into the ick and the good and all the things today.

Maggie: So I am Maggie. I run an agency called Scoop Studios where I work with corporate clients on the tax side. But I also run another business called Business Boss where I focus on mentoring for service business owners. And I've been in and around the online business world for 10 plus years. And I have a 20 plus year career in marketing and communications. So when I start seeing what's happening in online business I'm always, "That's not actually the way we need to market. That's not actually how we need to communicate."

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So I bring those years of marketing communications experience and then the ongoing work I'm doing with corporate clients where I'm seeing things being done in a values driven ethical way without all this hoopla and deception and manipulation and I'm always like, "Yeah, I'm going to be the professional skeptic that talks about all of these practices and what the alternatives can be." Because I think we have kind of fallen into this trap of thinking a lot of the things we'll see in the online world are, you know, I'll use air quotes, 'normal'.

And they're not so much normal as normalized, they're manipulative and they have more in common with cults and scams than actual solid business practices.

Tobi: Yeah, so interesting. So I love what you're saying because we do, I think get desensitized to the fact that the online world, Instagram, all these places are not the world. They're not the real world, they're a fabricated version of who we are. And there's some really interesting, what would it be, social experiments happening? We're kind of living the social experiment ourselves. We're in the middle of it and we can't really see it because we're a part of it.

And so I think what you're so great at is reminding us that not all of that is real world and there is business outside of social media and some of these online things. So I first found you, gosh, it's been, you'd have to tell me but probably a couple of years ago now when you first launched your *Duped* podcast. And it was so timely for me because I was working very closely on a lot of things in my business, working closely with Trudi Lebron with our values and all of our DEI work and starting to look at our online presence and how we were showing up.

And so you just came into my world and I started literally devouring all of your episodes. And so, well, let me just say this, I love that you're the professional skeptic because I'm the eternal optimist. And so I'm a very good critical thinker but sometimes I forget to notice that things have been

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normalized so that I can think critically about them. So that's what you do so well. So why don't you talk a little bit about that. What was *Duped* about? What is it that you're mostly talking about? And then we can kind of get into where we are today a couple of years after you've been doing this work.

Maggie: So *Duped* is a show and the subtitle is The Dark Side of Online Business. And it really came to be because my friend and co-host, Michelle Mazur, the two of us both have a very similar background in that she has a doctorate in communications. I have years of corporate communications and marketing experience. And the two of us, we've been friends a very long time. We kept having this kind of ongoing dialog in the DMs on Voxer about why, why this is happening. And both of us have been fairly critical on an individual basis in our work of a lot of these practices.

And we're like, "But what if we just started having some of these conversations and bringing in the research. Bringing in the psychology behind all this so people really understand exactly what you said, Tobi. We come into this with a really positive outlook and we think I can trust people. Our bias as humans is to naturally trust people. So we're not going to be skeptical. We might critically think but we're not going to critically think through this person's building a para-social relationship with me in order to manipulate me to get my money. No one wants to think about that.

So Michelle and I are kind of pulling back the veil, basing a lot of understanding the psychology and the research of it and a lot of the communications theory because I think we both have that unique perspective and lens on it in that this is work we've literally both done for our entire careers and so we're able to parse it out and bring a very specific perspective. And I think the most important thing for us with *Duped* is we're critiquing the business practices.

We're not, and I'll talk about this in a second but we're not trying to villainize anyone as much as I believe some of those people absolutely

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should be villainized. But we're really critiquing the practices. It's not about calling anyone out. It's not about incriminating anybody. It's really about consumer education and each of us becoming a much smarter, much more skeptical and savvy consumer ultimately.

Tobi: Yeah. And I think that I'm glad you said that because when I first started listening I think another probably human tendency is to be all or nothing and it kind of, you hear and you hear all this bad stuff. And then you're like, "I can't do anything anymore and I've probably done some of that." And you start to get freaked out. And then at the end of episodes you would say, "Now, don't get us wrong, people, we've also done some of these things and it's ongoing work."

And so let's talk about that a little bit deeper because I think the reason shows like yours are successful is because you don't spend the whole time sort of watering down your message. You give the strong message but people also, I think it is helpful for you to say, "We're not vilifying everyone. We're really urging you to really look at this deeper and to be intentional about the choices you're making."

Maggie: Exactly. And I think the all or nothing part of it is a really, really important distinction here because as this conversation has been evolving the last few years is it's really easy to say, "This person's doing this wrong. This person is doing this wrong." And to sensationalize it and to use it to gain popularity, fame, followers, whatever you want to do. And that's not really my goal because if I chose to do that I could do that, I could be done with this interview. I could go do that right now but what am I attracting in and what am I actually doing to shift the narrative?

So it's really important that we understand that these are layered issues, they're nuanced, they're complex. And that if you have used any of these tactics you're not automatically the worst person on the planet. I'm just giving you the information and the insight to hopefully encourage you to change. And on the flipside of that and this is the part that's probably the

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most important to me personally is if you're listening to this and you're like, "I fell for this." I don't want you to feel like a failure. I don't want you to feel like you are a victim.

The reality is these people are really, really good at what they are doing in the way they manipulate us, in the way they use language, in the way they use different psychological tactics on us. And we only do better when we know better ultimately. And I think it's like any other thing that you kind of go through those layers of unpacking and learning how to do better. It's the same with how you are going to run your business, market, attract clients, all those types of things.

Tobi: Yeah. And to that point about you're not the worst person in the world. A lot of us learned from the people, I mean, well, gosh these were all the practices that we're being taught honestly in online marketing. If you went to what you thought were the best people in that industry which I was doing because I was. In the industry I'm in mostly creative and interior design, we were kind of late to the online party, which is sort of a good thing because we didn't have quite as much time to get really good at some of the deceptive practices.

But when we would go to the people that someone would say, "Go learn from this person or that person." That was the model that was being taught and the only model that was being taught really was to sell, maybe not some of the more icky stuff but some of the things that can be borderline problematic of persuading people to buy things. Especially a lot of the things like, which thankfully I never did but persuading people to take out a lot of debt to invest in these big programs and all of that stuff.

So it was definitely what I was seeing and hearing from those people that were supposedly at the top of their game and the experts. And I guess technically they were kind of at the top of their game because they were profiting off of these practices in a lot of ways. So that's what people, in America especially we look at money, financial success as success and

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we're like, "I want some of that." And we forget to look at the consumer side of the equation.

Before we kind of get into where we are today I think let's talk about what – because people are like, "What are you all talking about? Tell me the things." Can you list some of the more and I don't even know if they're egregious, but problematic things that you see happening so people know what we're even talking about when we're breaking down what is ethical in sales and marketing and the online kind of business model? Can you talk about a few?

Maggie: Absolutely. So there's definitely a few things I like to bucket them together. So the first one is this kind of invented or maybe fractured authority. So we see this a lot in the online world because we all know people lie on the internet.

Tobi: Yes, and in the real world too of course.

Maggie: Yeah. So this is everything from I'm going to exaggerate my qualifications to I'm going to use my income as a way to basically show you that you can do this too. Also other things like the very fancy lifestyle photoshoots we see like you're really that lifestyle type marketing. All those things come into this bucket of... they're inventing authority so that you trust them. And I mean authority is a psychological persuasion principle. It is a proven documented well studied thing. And these are all signals to say, you can trust me, I'm legit.

When a lot of these things are actually really and truly, it's a mirage. It's not real. It's not real at all. It's a rented house. They're lying about their income. They're not actually qualified. They've never coached anyone before a month ago. Really looking at those things critically.

Tobi: Or they may have made a lot of revenues but they don't have any left to show for it because their profit margins were so low or they're hustling when they're pretending they're not hustling or all of the things, right?

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Maggie: Exactly. So that's kind of the marketing side of it. We see a lot of that invented authority. Then when you get into the sales part of it, this is what I call weaponized sales and storytelling. So we see these really dramatic stories and I mean it is, as soon as you know about these you are like, "There it is, check." It's, they're sharing a dramatic story of rags to riches, of I did this and you can too, of overcoming some awful thing. I invested all this money so you should do it too.

There's all these kinds of stories that get weaponized against us to really make us think that this is reality and that they're just like us. Well, no, they're not just like us. They're messing with us. So that's the story part of it. And then we get into sales tactics. This is where it really starts to fall apart for me. The other stuff is objectionable, this is treacherous. Coaching you through the sales process to handle your objections, the high pressure sales conversations that happen. And I mean there's a lot of horror stories around this.

The things that go on around payment plans. To really punish people for not being able to pay in full. Some of the application tactics. I actually saw an application yesterday and I'm going to actually talk about this on Instagram. But it literally asked for so much financial information to get on the call to apply to get on a call to talk about joining this \$25,000 program which neither here nor there how much the program is. But they were literally gathering that financial information so they could handle your objections on the call and coach you into it.

Tobi: That's really creepy, yeah.

Maggie: Yeah. And I actually felt quite ill when I read it because it just kept asking the same questions in different ways. And I was like, "Oh, this is so manipulative." And that's using a little thing called sunk cost fallacy. If I've spent the time filling out the application now, I feel like I've invested time. So I'm more likely to do the call. I'm more likely to say yes. It's a very specific tactic. So those are the types of things we see a lot of. It's a lot to

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do with getting you across that finish line and getting your money at all costs.

Tobi: Yeah. And I've been on the other side of that many times myself. And I've invested in tons of programs and tons of great programs honestly too. But I've been on the ones where people, not too long ago, I mean really not long ago at all I was talking to someone just in DMs that I had kind of followed for a while and I was really considering maybe working with them at some point. And she gave me the whole, "Well, space is so limited and if you don't book now there probably won't be another opportunity."

And so then when I came back I said something about being busy and she goes, "Well, because you're so busy, that's the whole thing, if you're running around hair on fire." And I said, "I didn't say that I was out of control busy. I just said I've been really busy, I'll get back with you." And so it's so interesting to watch and it turned me off so much. And then when she said, "Okay, well, if you can't join now then I guess in a few months if you want to check back in with my team and they'll let you know if we have any spots available."

And I'm thinking, okay, so I can talk to you now if I'm going to join but in the future I can't even talk to you. I have to talk to your team because I'm the measly not good enough person who didn't invest in you when I had the chance. So now I've been moved to the she's one of the bad ones, put her on the list. And maybe if somebody has time they'll talk to you which you know is a lie. And it's so funny because it wasn't a week later and then the week after that and the month after that, that she's still saying she has available spots and I was like, "Oh, I thought they were really limited."

So you can really spot it but I was so turned off. I was like, "We'll never work with this person." She lost me and I was really interested. So it was so interesting now that I know all of this to be on the other side of that, I was really, really turned off of the process.

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Maggie: And I think the experience you had, Tobi, is such a great example of this because what the argument often is, and I have these debates with people, they're like, "But this is the only way I can sell." What is not seen is the people who never will work with you. The people who won't work, I'm a great example of this. I won't ever work with someone if their price is not available publicly for a course or a program, something with a fixed price. If I have to get on a sales call or fill out an application to find out the price, don't waste my time.

And I think what is not seen in this is all the people you lose by doing those things. And I think so when the argument is, "Well, this is the only way to close people." I'm like, "I actually think you would get a better quality client if you did this in a way that was thoughtful and not manipulating people across the finish line. Maybe you'll make less money but you could sleep at night."

Tobi: Yeah. And I don't even know if you would make less money because when I think about the fact that some people, they write you off if you can't buy right now. And I think that makes no sense. Why wouldn't you have the attitude of you know what, we will absolutely be here when you're ready. And if you want to talk to me again, reach out, I'm totally happy to talk to you again. I want to be there for people because I want to actually help them. I don't want just their money today and then I'm onto the next person.

And so when you think about the message, and I'm not even saying this person wasn't actually interested in her clients but she's definitely sending the message that she's not because it's this, well, if you can't join today then never mind. And to me, that's so the opposite of the values we have. We will be here when you're ready. We will meet you with what you need. That's the whole point, otherwise it's about me and it's not about you. And so it's really interesting.

Maggie: And a really good test for this I think to make this really tangible for your audience is if you're dealing with a coach or a program or whatever,

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just be like, “Well, would I be okay with my interior design and be like, I don’t know how much this is going to cost. I’m just going to start working on your house.” No, does this pass in the real world? And the answer for all these tactics is no. Also the one I want to flag this one, the one you brought up, you can talk to my team. That is a tactic of gaining access to lead.

Or we’re putting people on a pedestal and this is where this stuff starts to verge on being culty. We’re supposed to revere these people. We’re not supposed to ever challenge them. They have the answers and the secrets. And those things are so unhealthy for us as humans. Yes, maybe they’re making – I’ll use the air quotes, ‘making millions’ or whatever the case is or maybe they’re successful in business. They’re still people and if I’m your client I should be treated with respect and regard for me as a human being.

Tobi: Yeah, absolutely. And it is easy, I think that’s one of the really slippery slopes of the online world and that whole influencer culture is we did learn to start putting people on pedestals based on their highlight reels and all of those other things. And I really had to check myself a few years ago because I had some people on some pedestals and I was working with my own life coach one day and she was laughing and we were like, “You know, there’s not a pedestal. There’s not a club. No one’s in it. They’re not in a different level or layer than you.”

Yeah, I mean maybe their financials are different but like you said, they’re human beings, they have all the same human traits you do. They’re going to have lots of problems themselves. And so we really have to remember that I think regularly that the guru and the influencer kind of cultures are one of the problematic things and it’s so easy for people to do. I have people put me on pedestals, I’m sure people put you on pedestals. Even about this work, like you were saying. They’re like, “She’s the person that knows what not to do and what to do ethically.”

It’s so easy for people to want to put us somewhere because they see us or other people on a podcast or on a show or on Instagram or they look at our

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followers and think they have more than me. They must be better than me. And I just agree with you, we have to constantly be checking ourselves and also reminding our followers, we're not anything different than you are. We're just real human people too.

Maggie: And to that vane, social media has just made this incredibly possible and it's very unhealthy. And then the flipside of this is there's this separation while there's also this unhealthy encouraging of relationships in a para-social way. And then we start to think these people are our friends. They're not your friends. They're not. Yes, they're just people but putting them on a pedestal or mistaking them as your BFF, these are very specific tactics.

When you think someone is, I'll use good or you can trust them because they're just like you I would slow down again and question that. Because I think it's really easy to think that people using these tactics are a sleazy guy beside a Lamborghini. It's less and less like that. And they are more like someone who looks like me who looks pretty non-threatening. I mean as several of my clients tell me, it's a good thing you use your powers for good not evil because I could totally be scamming everyone's money on the internet.

Tobi: Yeah. Well, and you know how to do it because you've seen what works and what doesn't work. That's such a great point, yeah. Okay, so we've been talking about all these online things. And I mean the world kind of works that way too, I mean in general, the whole online thing we know we look at something on Nordstrom and then we go on Facebook. And then the next thing we know that same pair of shoes is being advertised to us. This is sort of like Alexa hears what you're talking about in your kitchen and then she's showing you something to buy.

So there's a lot of this happening in the world in general and I think the consumer is becoming more and more savvy to it and skeptical of it. The only bad part about that in some ways is I think it does make it a little bit

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more difficult but that's okay for the coaches to really show up and make sure they're doing things right. The onus is now back on the coaches to prove that they aren't doing this stuff because the shoe was on the other foot for a while. I think all the online businesses and coaches had all the power and now it's shifting a little bit again.

But where do you see us now? Where are things? What should we be looking out for? There's some new tactics and ways to work the system that you're seeing, what does it look like now?

Maggie: So here's the good news. I do think the tide is turning in terms of consumers being more savvy. And a lot of this, I do think comes down to, someone said to me not that long ago, "What do you think has changed?" I said, "I think that the market has matured." And as you've been around this longer, I've been in this 10 years at this point and I mean 10 years ago it was a very baby industry. It's a much more mature industry. You see more things. You get more savvy. You develop more critical thinking.

But ultimately not everyone is mature. There's still new people coming into this all the time and that's the bad part of it. Yes, the industry is maturing but I'm also seeing in tandem with all – there's more conversations about how can we do this in a way that is more humane, that's prioritizing the needs of the buyer over the lust of the seller to make all the money? The conversation that's happening in parallel with that is the tactics are just as bad if not worse than they have ever been in a lot of ways.

And I think the reality is, is it would be easy to be like, "Yeah, everything's getting better. "I think since the advent of the pandemic and now going into a potential recession, I'll just call it a potential recession right now, it's probably really a recession all the way. There is a lot more vulnerability. There's a lot more people who are financially strained. Their decision-making is compromised and they are ripe to be scammed and victimized by these people.

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Tobi: Yeah, okay. And now that we're okay, there's a group that is choosing to be ethical but that's a little tricky too because anybody can slap ethical or equitable or any of these words on their marketing and their business. So how do we start to know, I mean I know the work that I'm doing in my own company. I talk about it a lot here but what should we be looking for when we're working with other people? And is it still buyer beware? Is it just on us to figure it out as consumers?

Because I'm both a seller and a consumer, I'm on both sides of the coin. I still hire coaches, wonderful coaches and programs and I offer them, but how do we know what to look for in your opinion?

Maggie: Yeah. So I think this is probably the most important, the thesis of my work is that for us as consumers it is unfortunately buyer beware. We are seeing, as over the last two, two and a half years as there's been more of a pushback from consumers in terms of expectations for who they do business with, they want to have their values aligned. They want to make sure that they're doing business in a certain way. Well, guess what, people who are doing things that I consider questionable have become more savvy.

So they know how to kind of fluff this up, put a little lipstick on the pig, whether that be throwing ethical in front of something or talking the talk. But a great example is you've mentioned values. Well, you want to do business with someone whose values align with you. So great, what are their values? You look at their values. Well, their values on this page on the website are pretty meaningless. How are those values being operationalized and how do you as the consumer or potential client see that in the business?

And that requires a level of slowing down and excavating it to really figure out, is this just lip service or is this actually deeply embedded in how they're running their business? And I think the thing I'm seeing a lot of, there's all these ethical marketing certifications popping up which I do want to just

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discuss why I think that's a problem in a second. But anyone can say they're ethical but ultimately I don't care if you say you're ethical or not. I need to see the actions.

And if you pay really careful attention you look at who these people learn from, you look at what might qualify them to say they're ethical, how they're actually executing their business practices. It's all made up. It's just marketing spin. It's no different than anything else. And we see this across social justice. We see this across manipulative marketing. We see this time and time again. It's greenwashing, pinkwashing, ethical washing, whatever you want to call these things, [inaudible] washing. It happens time and time again and it's happening here within online business unfortunately.

Tobi: And you were going to say something about the certifications too.

Maggie: Okay, yeah. And I'm sure, Tobi, you listened to this episode. We did an episode on Duped about certifications.

Tobi: I did.

Maggie: And I'm not anti-certification. I'm anti these garbage made up certifications that don't actually mean anything. And I think one of the reactions a lot of us have, because we have all invested in education as business owners in different things, certifications. So our reaction to try to solve a problem is I'm going to learn about this, great. I'm going to go get certified in this so that I have a checkmark and a seal of approval from someone external, the problem being when it comes to ethical marketing and I really don't even like ethical business.

There's no one set of requirements. There's no one ethical standard, ethics at its truest form or individual and need to be at that individual level. And for anybody from my point of view to be like, "This is good. This is bad and I'm going to be the arbiter of this conversation and charge you for it." That to me really does not sit well. And I mean full transparency, I have been

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talking about this a lot of the stuff for years. I've had lots of people ask me to do courses, trainings, certifications.

There is a market for this stuff and it is, unfortunately there is a market for it and people are going to feel that need in the market. So the only way I see it, consumers just deciding for themselves. And being willing to commit to doing the work to figuring this out. The same way many people have gone on their journey to try to build a more equitable business and understanding their privilege. It is the same level of commitment and layers to it. That it's not a quick fix that you're just going to go take a course and get certified and be like, "Yeah, I'm good."

Because I can guarantee you what you're learning in those things is not actually all that ethical by an objective outside standard. And there is academic research about what it means to do ethical communications or ethical marketing. I'd much rather you spend your time on that than you spend your time on these scams.

Tobi: Well, and I think one of the things you said that's so true and important is when you find any business and whether we're talking sales, marketing, ethical, anything, equity. And someone says there is a right way and a wrong way, I think that's a big red flag because there's a million different ways. As you started this conversation everything is nuanced, everything has a lot of factors. It depends on even who you are and what you come from.

And I mean I'm a privileged white woman. It's a lot different for me to make some of these decisions than it is for maybe somebody in a different lived experience to make these decisions. And so there's so much to it. And then the other thing that I've noticed with the classes and courses and certifications and trainings and things I've done is not only do I look for someone who says there's a lot of nuance and helps you figure out what is actually aligned for you.

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But then they also have ongoing trainings and it's not a one and done, you put this thing on your website and you're like, "I'm certified." It's the beginning of a journey of this work for a lifetime. And so they're continually learning and having you look at things again and see if anything's changed and it's a process. So yeah, so I think for a lot of people, just to be looking at who you're learning from and if there is one right way to do anything, including interior design or something creative. That's not ever going to be true. There's so many different ways to operate your business to think.

I mean everybody has different values. So even if the coaches' values aren't the same as yours, how could their system be exactly perfectly right for you?

Maggie: And I mean for me it's the audacity of it. Who appointed them as the person to be the all-seeing? It's just so, the ego of it and humor and I just can't. I'm always like, "Really? Really?" I just don't have that level of audacity and just so everyone knows, that's not a limiting belief, it's just a fact.

Tobi: Yeah, so good. Okay, so let's talk a little bit before we wrap up about the people that are offering things because we do help people. And I think it's a wonderful thing to create scalable offers when it's right for their business. It's not right for everybody but we definitely have people who have a limited amount of time but they do have wonderful things to offer and so they can create things that they can sell out in the world and online.

But I think a lot of people are now scared of this process when they're hearing shows like this and they're like, "I'll just keep doing what I'm doing because I'm afraid to move into", and I've seen this with equity work, DEI work, inclusion work, whatever we want to call all of those things. People get afraid to get it wrong, to get called out, to get canceled, to harm someone. And so they just don't move forward at all. And again that falls into the all or nothing.

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So what should people be thinking about if they are thinking about offering some kind of something to sell online or they want to do some coaching or consulting or something else, what matters the most to start this kind of checklist of what I'm being intentional about?

Maggie: Yeah, so I think there are a few things I would really encourage people is number one is, staying in your scope of practice. And I think this is a really important distinction in the context of the online world because there is this idea that anybody can be anything. That's like if I was like, "Hey, Tobi, I'm an interior designer now." I literally could do that on the internet. I've designed something in my home. I'm an interior designer now.

Tobi: A lot of people do actually also, yes, they do that.

Maggie: Exactly. So I think if you want to come from this from a place of being really in integrity, what is actually in my scope of practice? What are my skills? What are my experiences? What qualifies me uniquely to do this work? I think digging into that is a really good place to start because it's really easy to be like, "Someone says you should be coaching on this." Well, is that in my skill set and should I really be doing that?

And I'm sure with a little bit of thought and a little bit of digging into that most people can find something that is actually really and truly they can stand behind. That they would be proud to actually do whether that's coaching on a very specific thing or creating a course on it. Starting from being in your scope of practice and staying in that scope of practice. I'm very clear with my clients, I'm like, "Not a money professional. Not a lawyer. Yes, I'm a business consultant." But I am very clear on where that ends.

And I think being really clear on where your lines are and where you might refer out or just say, "Not for me." That's a really good place to start. The other thing to consider is the time. And when I say the time, not the time it's going to take to invest in getting up to speed. The time it's going to take for this actually to happen. We have been incorrectly taught in the online

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business world that things happen really, really fast. And the reality is, is when you're just starting out and you are doing something new whether that be a service, or a course, or a program or whatever that might be.

It is going to take a lot of time. There's always these ads, I'm constantly screenshotting them. Sell your thing with no audience. Well, guess what, you are going to probably have to build some type of audience and it's going to take much longer than you think. One of the most humbling things for me is I am literally a career marketer. And it took me a long time to build my audience. And it continues to be something that requires constant time and attention and energy from me. And I mean I am very committed to that and that's fine.

But I think this sell your thing overnight, that's not the way it is. So I think you have to really decide, is this something I want to do for not just the next six weeks, how about the next six months or next six years? Really look at this is a long term plan for me to actually do this work because I really feel like people seriously underestimate the time. And then I think evaluating what are the tactics you are willing to use. What's aligned with your values? What's aligned with how you want to run your business because things like even pricing again, layers and nuances.

And it's also going to depend a lot on how you want to operate. I price my things in a very specific way based on my business values and my personal values. And it's because I am very committed to not perpetuating certain systems of oppression. And I'm also really committed to not being extractive in my business processes.

Tobi: Yeah, I agree. And also even knowing what it costs you to provide things, not just picking a pie in the sky price. We do have a more expensive program but we also provide weekly calls with me for a year and one-on-one coaching with a certified coach on our team in addition to that. And we pay other mentors to come in and teach the things that we're not experts in, any kind of equity work or any kind of certain types of marketing and certain

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types of operations that we want to go deeper than what my expertise is. And so we're paying those people to come into the program.

So we didn't just profit 97% on this thing because we put a big, huge price tag on it and we're like, "Let's go milk some money out of these people." We're like, "What can we charge for this that is appropriate to the amount of support they're getting and the money we're also investing to bring this program together?" And I think that is so important because I've even heard, I mean it blows my mind when I hear you say this on some of your episodes. I guess I'm a little bit sheltered and I didn't kind of know some of these things are out there.

Although I have encountered one recently and I almost threw up when I heard the price that it was 50,000 for six months. And I was like, "Holy cow." And then I found out the person doesn't even really show up very much and has those people that are paying 50,000 to teach other parts of her programs as part of their training. And I was like, "What?" But I've heard you say there's these \$100,000 things.

Maggie: Oh my gosh, yes.

Tobi: Yeah, wow. I'd have to be coaching with I don't know, Jeff Bezos, although I don't want to learn from him. But to pay a really high price I'd have to be, I want a Shopify account and I want to be coached by Bezos of how to make money to pay a 100 grand. That blows my mind that there are things out there.

Maggie: I always joke that they need to be living at my house being me. For \$100,000 you'd better be being me because you better be offering a lot for 100K. And that's the rub is the more expensive some of these things are the less the quality is, the less support you get. And I think as a consumer it's a really important thing to not get trapped in this idea that something may be better because it costs more. I have this, every time I enroll for one

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of our masterminds, I didn't have it this year. Maybe it's *Duped*, I've knocked this out of everybody.

But I will always have at least one call where people are like, "But the people in the program can't be good because this isn't super expensive." And I'm always like, "That's your loss. I mean you want to go pay three times that to be in a mastermind, that's on you but there's a very specific reason." And I've priced it, I know all my inputs. I know what it costs to deliver. I know what time is like. The price is based on a very thoughtful set of inputs, not just a random price. And it is profitable for us so I'm very comfortable with our price point.

Tobi: Yeah, so good. And I think to all of these points to also remind the people that are thinking about building something, if you're planning on building it and just having other people run it and your name is on it that's really not transparent either. You need to say, "My name is on it but I'm never going to be teaching the classes. I'm never going to show up on the calls. You don't get any access to me for this price if that's the case." Because I think that happens so often and people don't know that until they get in.

And then they're like, "Wait, I thought I was learning from Tobi, where is she? Why can't I ever talk to her? Why is she never on the calls?" Which is a huge problem.

Maggie: And you made the point of saying when you were talking about your program, they have the group calls with you but they have one-on-one with a certified coach. Being very clear on that is so, so important because I hear stories constantly from people who are like, exactly, "I signed up and I never saw them again and I was being coached by someone that has never even had a business." And that we know is being paid \$20. And FYI everybody, if you're paying guest teachers or coaches in your program, please make sure you're paying them really well.

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They're doing meaningful substantive work in your business, please don't exploit them. That is one of my biggest pet peeves.

Tobi: Yeah. It's not like I'll have you on my podcast and we'll get you some exposure if you'll come teach for free in my program. That's a no. That's a hard no. Pay people for their expertise. I absolutely agree with you. So anything else that you want to say before we wrap up? I've been waiting for you to be on for so long because I really do love the work that you're doing and appreciate you being my professional skeptic for me and reminding me, not only what to look for in other people.

But especially I think what really serves me the most is to really take a hard look at myself and our programs and the things we're doing and being really intentional about how we're showing up. But is there any other thing you want people to think about either on the consumer or the provider side?

Maggie: I do think there's one thing whether you're a business owner or you're a consumer is to really just spend some time, and this could be listening to podcasts like *Duped* or reading books or documentaries. I think the more time you kind of – cults and scams are having a cultural moment right now. So the more you kind of understand how these things operate the more you're kind of building that skill for discernment around it. And almost kind of some muscle memory because a lot of this stuff, and we didn't even get into this.

There's a lot of stuff that goes on around mindset and kind of knowing where you're pliable and manipulating you, that is really problematic. And it's as humans when someone says to you, "Well, this is just a mindset problem you're having." Of course you examine that. Of course you want to believe them. And so I think the more savvy you get about some of those tactics and how you might be being played that will really, really help you. And I mean there are so many different things out there you can watch.

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And I think watching it from the lens of not disbelief, oh my God, how did these people fall for it? But that's really interesting. I see how someone could get sucked into it because it's really important to admit and there is, I can't remember off the top of my head, there is a psychological study on this. If you are willing to admit you are vulnerable you are more apt to not fall prey to this.

Tobi: That's so good. Yeah, and I think it's frustrating how often the word 'mindset' gets used because we do have some mindset things that we can change for ourselves if we want to grow and that's totally different than someone saying, "Well, the reason you can't pay for this \$20,000 course is just your mindset. You've got a mindset block about it or a limiting belief." Or they're saying, "Well, we can't give you a refund because you didn't do all the work and the fact that you're mad about this is you've got a mindset issue. You need to go check yourself and see why you weren't committed to this program."

There's all of these creepy things where the mindset ideas used to gaslight you. And the thing that I get most frustrated about I think is it gives the real important parts of these concepts a bad name because yeah, we actually do get stuck in thought loops sometimes that aren't serving us. And we want to change our mindset but other people know exactly how to use that against us especially when they're wanting us to invest in something or when they don't want to give us money back or they don't want to be ethical in the way they're operating.

Maggie: Yeah, it's very sneaky and it's very subtle. And things like if you would just commit, those are red flags. And if you start looking at how scams and cults actually operate. I mean I don't say this lightly, it is the same tactics and these tactics are pervasive across self-help, MLMs, the wellness world, online business, cult scams. It's the same things because humans are hardwired pretty much the same at the end of the day. How our brains work and operate might be slightly unique but ultimately the levers that people can pull on are very, very similar.

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Tobi: Yeah, so good. Okay, well, if people want to know more, they can go check out *Duped*. And you have what, three seasons?

Maggie: Three seasons, yeah. We have three seasons of *Duped* and that's episodic. So we come and go on that because that show takes a fair bit to produce.

Tobi: Yeah, a lot of research. And then I've really been enjoying, I think they're also your podcast episodes but I've been enjoying the written version on your blog of some of these things because sometimes, well, a lot of times honestly, I take stuff in better when I read it. Or as opposed to just listening because sometimes I can trail off and miss parts of things on podcasts sometimes. So can you tell us the difference and where's your body of work in the world besides the *Duped* podcast? Because you have your own stuff that's just completely you in the world as well.

Maggie: Yes. So my Small Business Boss, we focus on working with serviced business owners. But I also have these very in depth well researched essays because I am a writer at heart despite having all these podcasts. So the BS free service business podcast or you can go to the smallbusinessboss.co website on the blog. There's always audio and written because different learning styles for different people.

Tobi: Yeah, it's good. And I take them in both ways. Sometimes I read it and then I listen to it again. Because again it's a lot to take in and I have to hear things more than once sometimes and all the things. And they should probably also if they just want to be entertained, follow you on Instagram because you've got some really fun ways of talking about and calling attention to the things that we want to be mindful of. So where do they find you on Instagram?

Maggie: I'm @smallbusinessboss on Instagram. And thank you, Tobi, for saying that because I shared this on Instagram the other day, I am a writer trying to make social video about very complex nuanced topics is one of

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the – it has been the biggest learning curve for me. So I'm like, "How do we make this in six seconds?"

Tobi: Yeah, well, it's good and I'm entertained and I love your facial expressions and your sarcasms and your reels and those things are fun. And just to get a reminder because we can get really, I think, stressed out about this work. And not that you're making light of it but at least there is sometimes some comic relief mixed in, in the way that you present some things which is good for me because it makes me stop and pay attention so thanks for all the work you're doing in the world and thanks for being here today.

Maggie: Yeah, thank you so much for having me.

Tobi: Yeah, I loved it. Okay, well, I'll be seeing you out in the wild, wild west of the internet some more. I know you're going to be there and I can't wait to stay in touch. Are you doing another season of *Duped*? Is that going to keep going?

Maggie: Yeah. So we're coming back in January. There's going to be a special episode in the next couple of weeks and then we'll be back in January. We've had a dramatic turn of events, both of us have had lots of life stuff. And we're just like, "*Duped* is the side project." So we're like, "Something's got to give. It's going to have to be *Duped* unfortunately."

Tobi: Yeah, well, I understand that and that's why we are so appreciative that you are doing this work because you're not getting paid for all of that work that you're also doing in the world. That's, I guess, your public service project that you're doing for us in a lot of ways for free, so thank you for doing that for us.

Maggie: Well, thank you and if anyone's listening here who would like to give us money to do *Duped*, I'll take it.

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Tobi: Okay, perfect, yes, speaking of, yeah, speaking of money and how do they give you money for *Duped*, seriously?

Maggie: Yeah, we don't have a way, I am totally joking.

Tobi: Okay, there's no Venmo for the support of *Duped*.

Maggie: We've discussed different ways and I'm like, "But then does it create a whole thing?"

Tobi: Does that completely undermine everything we just said when we're like, "Don't be manipulated." Oh, and by the way, pay us to do this work. Yeah, it's tricky.

Maggie: It's complicated as usual.

Tobi: Okay. Well, the main way they can support you is to learn from you and to keep you in mind when they need support especially in their service based business. And a lot of people listening do have service based businesses. So you all, go check out all Maggie's offers, she's got a lot of great stuff in the world and again, thank you for being here today.

Maggie: Yeah, thanks so much, Tobi.

Okay, friends, so I know Maggie's in the process of changing her business name but you can find her on Instagram @smallbusinessboss. And reach out to her, take a look at what she's doing in that space. She's super active. It's fun but it is real. She does not put up with any BS. She tells the truth. She calls out the practices and the problems in the online space. And it's okay if you notice that you've done a few of those things.

Don't be too hard on yourself as we talk about in the episode but just learn from the experience and hopefully learn from this conversation and from Maggie that there is a better way to do business with people. So that you

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can absolutely feel great about the work you're doing in the online world, the way you're selling in the online space and know that your customers are getting the most honest and real and transparent version of you so they can sign up and work with you.

Alright friends, enjoy your week and I'll see you back here one week from today with another great episode of *The Design You Podcast*, bye for now.

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