

Ep #265: Bringing Lighting and Tech into the Planning Process with Joe Borress



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 265.

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.

Man, we are rolling through these podcasts, 265. How fun. And today's episode is fun. It's a little bit different than what I sometimes have. I don't always have people talking about the process of design or home building or any of those things, which we may add more of that sometime soon because we have some things up our sleeves, but today we're going to start the ball rolling with Joe Borress. So, Joe is the CEO of Tri Star Electric and Automation. It's a company based in California. They do consulting all over the country, probably the world but definitely in the US.

And what's so cool about Joe is he's flipping the script on luxury residential lighting and technology design. And you know me, I love anybody who flips the script, who's a rebel, who thinks differently. And you'll learn all about Joe in the podcast but he's really on a mission for the lighting and the tech piece of luxury homes to come into sort of the beginning of the planning process. And to really connect the dots between designers and architects and home builders because there is something so amazing about what technology can do for our homes.

But it's hard to make it happen as an afterthought, sometimes it's too late to do some of the amazing things that we don't even know as designers that we can do because we need someone like Joe who's working in the tech and looking at all the options, to guide us along the way. So I'm going to be quiet and let you hear my interview with Joe. It's a really good one. I'm such a student in this interview which I love. I always love learning, I hope you learn a lot too and I'll see you at the end of the show.

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Tobi: Hey Joe, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm really excited about this conversation we're going to have. I'm sure I'm going to learn a lot today.

Joe: Well, thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited as well. This is a really great opportunity for the design team to be able to hear from the electrical and lighting construction world on how we should [crosstalk] together and answer each other's questions.

Tobi: I like it. And so you're a little bit different than some of the typical guests that I have. I was telling you that. So this is really fun. We're going to get really into the inner workings of what a design project could be like. And you're on a mission to change what they're currently like, which is what you're going to tell us. So why don't you tell us that, tell us who you are, what you do, and then we'll just kind of go from there.

Joe: Sure. Thank you so much. So my name is Joe Borress, and I own a company here in Malibu, California, called Tri Star Electric and Automation. And we do design build projects specializing either in the luxury new construction sector and also hospitality guest rooms. And what our main mission is, is to try to kind of recreate the vision of how projects should come to get designed first and then built according to those designs.

So I think that it's my mission to kind of change how the design process happens by introducing electrical lighting and technology to that conversation early on to make a successful project. And most important is to deliver a great experience for the homeowner.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that. And so I definitely have the experience that you have been describing to me in our chat before we started about how usually, I mean a lot of people do bring in someone like you that they know to be an expert. But we bring you in when we're ready to start thinking about, okay, now, what is the tech now, where do we put it in, not from the

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floor plan place. But the studs are up, the walls are coming up, maybe some electricals have been put in, in a general way.

And then we start to think about what are all these bells and whistles we want. And at that point, we've missed a lot of opportunity, is what you're saying. So talk to us a little bit about how you would like to be introduced into the project because I think you're so right that designers and architects get on board a lot of times way sooner than we think about the lighting consultant, the tech, the AV. Even though the client a lot of times, the thing they're most excited about is all the AV and automation and technology and all of those things.

Joe: Exactly. So early on it's really the only way and I'll tell you why. If you go to the first [inaudible] that you mentioned earlier that the studs are already up, maybe some electricals [inaudible]. And now let's start talking about the nitty gritty. What that's kind of doing is now starting, which could be months' worth of conversations and discussing different technologies and what the client's passionate about, if they listen to vinyl or not or if they have a man cave or if there's going to be a dedicated theater or a family media room or a Zoom room if they work from home.

All that stuff now is just going to delay the project because now you're first starting to talk about, so just imagine you're building a house and say, "Okay, where do you want to put the kitchen?" And now we're going to start designing a kitchen and cabinets. And how do you cook? And what kind of island? Do your kids [crosstalk]? All that stuff starts to trickle around. So first is where it's all about. And one of the biggest things I could say as a takeaway is we have to know who the client is. Just like you won't decorate somebody's house without knowing what style they like and how they're going to use the home.

We feel the same exact way. Where do they have dinner with their family? Where do they unwind after the day? What type of lighting can we create within the home to make them really, it's not just lights on or lights off, how

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to create an entertaining mood or reading mood. I was thinking about, a lot of times decorative lamps that are purchased by the interior designer later on in the project, are they going to be controlled through the lighting control system for the home if there is one? How is that incorporated or what kind of wattage are we using?

Are we lighting art? How big are the paintings? How far are the joists off of the ceiling so we can put this art lighting in to really make it epic. So all these things happen. Do they want home automation? Do they know what home automation is? So we can kind of teach the homeowner what that is. How they can control their home from their phone, view their cameras. What surround sound, meanings and where is it important, do they watch the TV in bed? Are they righties or lefties? That also makes a big difference on how they use, where the keypads are going to go or touchscreens and all that kind of stuff.

How do we make tech disappear through invisible speakers and other different products that we can, not necessarily more expensive, but how do we design it for the client's lifestyle? So all these conversations, all this rattling, I'm sorry, I'm originally a New Yorker.

Tobi: No, I love it, it's so good.

Joe: These are the things we have to talk about. And also what I love to start that conversation is motorized shades, finishes for all the outlets, keypads, light switches, what patine do they come in? What happens with landscape lighting if they're outside? Will it darken? Will it change colors with the environment? Is it a coastal environment? All these things that go up and I love to try to avoid any afterthoughts. And I know this for a fact, if you ask any client, wouldn't they rather spend one lump sum of money once, than smaller amounts 10 times over?

Tobi: Yeah, totally. Well, what I hear you saying too and I love this, I'm already, I knew I was going to learn a lot today but my mind is already

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having fun imagining the possibilities of the things that you're talking about. But what I notice is maybe kind of what we're saying is that the lighting engineer and designer and tech person doesn't get the same respect, you didn't say that, I'm saying that, that we see other people in the process getting the respect.

I don't think that we're really noticing, yeah, we do need to tell the lighting designer all these intricate things about the client and how they live. And we forget that that's not just information that the architect or the interior designer need to hear.

Joe: Yeah, it doesn't trickle down.

Tobi: Yeah. And we see people now starting to say, "Let's make maybe the whole outdoor space and the pool and all of that a big priority." But what we're not seeing consistently time and time again is this whole component of the technology and electronics and lighting all being brought in as early. So essentially we just need to be more holistic about the entire approach and in the planning stages say, "Who else needs to be sitting at this table or in this conversation", kind of is what you're saying.

Joe: 100%. And I think when you have the client's best interest in mind in regards to their experience, that should go throughout the entire process with every single trade. And obviously for me it's the lighting and electrical trades. But when it comes to Wi-Fi access points, where are they going? How many electrical panels need to go into the home? Where are they going? Is there stud space? Are they going in the laundry room, garage, is there a dedicated equipment closet? Why is it important to put a dedicated equipment closet into this place?

You'll maybe lose a third coat closet and these are the reasons why. All that stuff should go into it so it takes that guess work out later on. So if the [inaudible] gets built, I think it's harder for the interior designer to now design around already installed items that may not make sense. So for

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example, if you go into a mudroom, why is there a bench in a mud room? Because everybody knows that in a mud room, it's a good place to sit down, take off your boots, put them away nice and neat and not just kick them off in the hallway.

There was a reason for that. So why shouldn't that sort of, well, an example, transcend into every part of the project?

Tobi: Yeah. So I'm thinking about this process and I'm thinking about as a designer, so many people listening are designers and creatives. And I'm thinking, okay, what gets me excited about using say the latest in kitchen appliances? And it's when I can see that at KBIS or I can see other people at this show, showing me all these cool things that I didn't know existed. And then once I see them, now I can start to think, if we want to incorporate that like that, we need to think about that sooner. So what is the equivalent of that, is that you just starting to tell us here on this show today?

What are some of the cool things that are possible that we don't even know? We may not know what we don't know which might be part of the reason that we're not bringing you in early enough because we kind of didn't know we wanted that thing. And so I would love to be educated on how do we get up on the latest and greatest of what's even possible to do? Because I'm sure you would say, "I can do anything you want, Tobi." But if I don't know what I don't know, then how do I know to have those conversations?

Joe: That's exactly right. So I think the easiest place to start is to get with somebody like myself in any area of the United States to where they're like-minded, to where they want to do everything that we've talked about today. So we have a showroom here and where we have all these things on display. And we spend time with the client or with the design team going over every facet of the project from everything we talked about, for bespoke electrical devices to lighting controls, what Lutron is as far as a brand name versus home automation with savant and shades and different lighting.

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Kelvin color temperatures and different fabrics and everything you could possibly think of. So there'll be somebody like that in everybody's market that can do that. But another thing is, it's really important, so when you go to a kitchen store, you're expecting that kitchen designer where they have all the latest and greatest self-closing drawers and they understand if it's a chef's kitchen, where the blender goes in relation to the knife space, and all that kind of stuff.

Where I'm expecting somebody else like myself in my industry to do the same thing. So for example, there's a tiny little item called a docking drawer. It's nothing proprietary that I sell, it's just a really cool product that goes into a drawer in your home, in your kitchen, in your bathroom, in your hotel, whatever, where there's outlets in that drawer to charge all of your items, whether it's a hairdryer, an iPad, your phone, anything like that. It's a very simple item and it gets wired by your electrician. But just that little, tiny detail now gets all your counter clutter off.

So now you pull open your drawer and then everything's in there charging, it's [crosstalk]. So those are the little, tiny, little nuances that we like to add into projects, not that it's a major trying to upsell product, this is the opposite. It's giving somebody a better experience by just having an outlet on the counter with 800 things plugged into it. It's just a little bit of mindset and a thought, it's not really about the gadgets, because one thing about technology that's very important for everybody to understand is that's endless.

There's always going to be technology, the day you buy your 8K TV, there's going to be a 9K TV, so it's not really about that. It's not a product, it's not going to change your life, it's just what products are out there with the right like-minded people to design and install it to make your experience a better one, that's all.

Tobi: Yeah. So if you are thinking about the future of your home or that by the time you buy something it's basically on its way to being obsolete. What

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is your philosophy? How do you start to help people really decide, not only what gadgets or things they are going to buy? But I think there's a step before that. It's more about just how we want to feel in our house, how we want to live, what is it that you look for? Is it the emotion someone wants to feel in their house? Is it less stress, convenience, all of those things? What drives your process usually?

Joe: It's one word, enjoyment. That's it, it's just enjoyment. You want to come home to your place no matter how small or how big it is and realize that it's epic. And it could be epic in a one bedroom or a 20 bedroom. How do you make that experience? It's with really good lighting that is properly designed with its locations to accent certain things, to be dimmed at certain levels, to have appropriate color temperature for the area.

Nice finishes on the wall so you can go to your local hardware store and buy a regular outlet and a regular plate or you can go with a different brand that's a little bit more upgraded. They will still provide electricity to whatever you're plugging into it but it's not going to do the same design aesthetic, just like you can get a couch at one store and a couch at another. But they're both going to take on two different meanings and how they make you feel and how it goes with the overall look.

But I'm also a very big proponent in doing pre wire. And you always hear about this low voltage pre wire terminology, but the people know what it really means. I believe wired is always better than wireless. So if you are doing a new project where everything is open, either it's a new building or a complete renovation, where you can provide, install wiring throughout the home. Even if you're not going to put in motorized shades, you're not going to put in that extra wireless access point. You're not going to integrate landscape lighting into your interior lighting controls.

But if you put the wiring in place for now, you most likely will use it later on once you get settled and you realize, oh my God, I do need this at the pool house or I really do want to put shades in my daughter's bedroom now.

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Instead of trying to look for aftermarket battery operated products, which are also good quick fixes but there's no reason for that necessarily. And if you sell the home, you actually just made yourself a better investment because now your home [crosstalk] because it's prewired for smarter technology.

Tobi: Yeah, that's a great point, the house I currently live in, we took down, we bought and took down to the studs probably about seven years ago. And so as the designer, when my husband and I are deciding on the budget, which was healthy but not unlimited. And he would want some of the technology things. I was like, "Stop taking that out of my furniture budget." And so we were having this back and forth and it was so funny. I'm like, "You pay for your toys, I'm going to pay for my furniture. We'll all be happy."

And the funniest thing is when we then moved into the house, I'm the number one person using all of the technology and all of the gadgets and I work from home. He did during COVID, he's a lawyer but he didn't work from home every day like I do. I love all the music in the house. I love all of the lighting in the house. I love all of the extra stuff we have out by our pool. And so he just smiles every time I'm over at the keypad turning on all the gadgets.

Joe: But what I'm hearing you saying when you're describing that to me I'm hearing you're enjoying it.

Tobi: Yeah, totally.

Joe: So that you are enjoying all that stuff you put in and then when it comes time to budgeting, there's always a good way to look about it. So for example, if you're going to put speakers throughout your home for audio. Powder room, living room, dining room, maybe kitchen or breakfast nook, exterior and master bedroom for example, home office, all these areas.

Tobi: Yeah, we did all of those, we love it, yeah.

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Joe: Okay, perfect. But I would ask you, do you love to watch TV in bed? Do you guys like to watch movies? Do you use your family room as your entertaining space? And then maybe we'll put a little bit of a higher end quality sound system in there. But back off, not anything crappy but something less pricey for the common areas because it's just for background music for when you're entertaining. And that way you're fooling around with the budget and then getting a better experience without having to spend more money. It's the same fund, it's just distributed differently.

Tobi: Yeah, I love this conversation and I certainly am not trying to be super gendered, although I would say that it kind of is how a lot of times we think. And when it comes to projects we're like, "The man or the husband or certain types of people, the engineers, I don't know, certain people, the techie guys are going to like all of the gadgets and maybe we are not going to care so much about them." And I think that that's not true. As far as women or the designers or the people that maybe are more into reading than they are watching television.

There's so many opportunities that we don't even know that are going to make us feel a certain way in our home. So how do we start to bridge that gap and change that story to where it's not just this idea of my husband wants all the TVs? And it's more a conversation of understanding how you feel in a space when lighting is different or dimmed, or when you have these conveniences. How do we, I think just uplevel the whole, not only the...

Joe: The whole process actually.

Tobi: Yeah, how do we do that, how do we start to?

Joe: So one is as I mentioned earlier, I have that showroom where I demonstrate everything that you just talked about, so the husband and wife can really feel it and they get emotionally connected to how great it could be in their particular space. Also you cannot design a kitchen for anybody

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unless you have culinary experience in designing kitchens. You don't know how to do it. So you cannot design for a homeowner or a husband and wife unless you understand how that homeowner or husband and wife live or are expected to live.

So I don't design luxury aircrafts because that's not my industry. I don't know how, what is expected for somebody that's flying private to the Bahamas. So it's about knowing the audience and that's where you stay in your lane.

Tobi: That's a great point, yeah. And I don't think we always do that as designers. I think we just assume, well, I can design a closet and I can design a kitchen and I can pick out the lighting fixtures. And I'm not sure that we have, and maybe you could before technology, got to the point. Maybe 30 years ago that was true to some level. But I think that maybe we have not noticed how much of, not only a specialty but such a unique skill set and a unique knowledge set that it really is that maybe we are not giving enough, like you said, enough, I don't know.

Joe: It's the little extra thought into it.

Tobi: Yeah, thought, yeah.

Joe: And it makes me happy because it's not going to provide more business for me for example, just to know that if you read in bed, and your husband goes to sleep before you do. That I can get your reading light and your table lamp, side table lamp on separately than his. So he can crash out, you can still be at a dim level to read your book before you go to bed and have a pathway button next to your bed. So if you do have to get a drink of water or go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, you're not going to trip over your kid's LEGOs.

All this stuff is funny conversation but it's really true. So I just want to make it a better lifestyle for the client and have them have a better experience and then I'm doing my job right, that's it.

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Tobi: Yeah, I love it. So what are some of your favorite epic, you've hinted to a few things, but when you think of that epic space, what are some of your favorite things that we might not have heard of or known about or seen that come to mind that you absolutely love, including in projects?

Joe: Right. So the number one thing is lighting controls. So not to particularly plug one brand, so it's just called lighting controls. What are the lighting controls? Lighting controls is where your lights are controlled by a single touch. So for example, when you come into your home there would be a keypad on the wall, that would be engraved home for example. So I like to do it the front, are home, away, exterior, three buttons.

When you press home, when you come home, I will have that home seen, turn on certain things throughout the home that I feel it would be epic to you. And then we could tweak it on, once you get used to it a little bit. So there's no more pressing all these different buttons to go into different rooms. The whole show would happen based on how you use your home when you walk in at certain times of the day, which can be subjective to different scenes coming on at night.

The same when you leave, you press one button and the whole house can shut down or maybe not the kid's rooms, just the common areas. We all know our families, if you have children, they leave their lights on. They're great at turning them on, they don't know how to turn them off. I don't know what it is but my kids just do not know how to turn lights off. So this is where all that comes in. So not only are you saving energy, you're also creating an experience where you don't have to run through the house to shut everything off.

So that's one thing that I really love going into a home is lighting controls. And then you don't have wall clutter where you have 15 switches on the wall like the old days. You'd have one beautiful keypad that comes in different finishes, plastic, metal etc., different buttons and engraving, that really speak to the interior design of the home. Could be brushed chrome

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or antique bronze, all that kind of stuff, white. So that's one thing I really like. And then obviously layers of light. Different layers of light throughout the home to create an absolute mood.

Especially nowadays, floor plans are mostly open so you'll have your kitchen, living room all in kind of one space, kitchen, living, dining. So to have different under counter task lighting, you have art lighting, you have pendant lighting, you have recess lighting, you have cove lighting. All these different things going on at different illuminations with consistent color temperature will create an epic experience. And then you throw the music on, you're never going to want to leave.

Tobi: Yeah, exactly, okay. Anything in particular in some of those individual rooms like a kitchen or a bathroom that is really fun or exciting that we might not know about, that might get us more into this excitement about technology?

Joe: Yeah, I mean the little things I always love to talk about are the USB and the USB-C outlets. So you don't have to have the actual plug to charge, because what we do is lose, I mean I don't know how about you, but my phone dies all the time. So you're always looking to plug and charge something in. It's also nice that if it's for a homeowner that has children, by giving them a good easy way to charge their computer without having all the big clunky chargers. They're able to work in front of you with the kitchen island.

And so now you're maybe cooking dinner and then your child's out on the island working with you. And then you have some conversation, interactive space, so just by changing an outlet which seems like no big deal, you're now opening up an ease for them to charge while they're talking to you and hanging out with you while you're cooking dinner. And it makes it a little bit more of an interactive space.

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Things in bathrooms, I love illuminated mirrors. So there's two kinds basically. So you'd have obviously one that you open up the medicine cabinet through [inaudible]. A million companies make them, [inaudible]. Or you would open up the medicine cabinet, you'd have a GFI outlet in there and then obviously illuminated shelf lighting. But they also have lighting that is integrated into the face of the mirror. So if you want a very clean modern bathroom without two physical sconces, because it's nice to be lit up from the front especially if you're doing makeup.

Then those decorative fixtures integrated into the mirror so you'd have that as your front lighting which is a nice clean look. So you don't have a mirror, then two sconces and then downlighting and all the stuff going on, so I like that for bathrooms as well. And then one more thing for bathrooms, if there's a floating vanity, you like to do a toe kick LED tape light strip to put that on to a pathway scene, so if you do end up needing to go to the restroom at night you don't have to get blinded by the shock of the [crosstalk].

Tobi: Yeah. So a motion where it would come on, I've seen in hotels or it just stays on all the time or either?

Joe: No.

Tobi: You have all the options, yeah.

Joe: So you have an option to do an occupancy sensor in there, to have just that one toe kick come on. You also, if you do through a lighting control system like we spoke about, it would be pathway button so you would kind of lean over from the [crosstalk] pathway, which would be a button next to your nightstand or a little wireless tabletop on your nightstand and that would get you to where you have to go.

Tobi: So cool. Before you move on from this, anything about TVs? My house is the house that has literally a TV in every room. I think we have 11 TVs in 4,000 square feet, one of them is outside. And I hear designers all

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the time who are like, “I hate the TVs, hide the TVs.” But we’re sports people, we’re always watching something. It’s kind of the background of our life, if we’re having a holiday there’s a football or a basketball game on at any given moment. So anything to be excited about in the world of television?

Joe: Yeah. So, Samsung, they basically changed that game by doing a Samsung frame TV and you can even check it out at Best Buy, I’m sure they sell it, is where when the TV is not being used to watch sports, it has a static photo, that you can use one of their content or use one of your own. So you’re looking at a piece of art, but yet when it’s time to turn it on, then the game can go on and you can watch TV. So at least you don’t have that big black TV with your reflection in it in every room. So to me that’s a really good way to integrate art and then technology. So it looks beautiful but yet it’s functional.

Tobi: Yeah, I agree. Okay, so what about, we didn’t even put this on the realm of possibilities but I’m going to bring it up anyway, I think it’s important. What about budget, can the average person start to create epic stuff in their spaces without a ton of money or is there a certain percentage of the budget you need to be thinking about for all of this? How do we get there?

Joe: I’ll tell you. So any price point, any price point because there are, I don’t know if you want to use the term, plug and play but there are lower price point items that you’ll see online, Amazon, Home Depot, Lowes. That you can do color changing light bulbs to adjust the Kelvin lighting temperature as you dim. Obviously you could buy dimmer switches. You can buy upgraded wall plates to make the devices a little more bespoke and higher end to add to your design intent for the room that when you’re doing a design for yourself let’s say.

Sonos obviously is an entry level speaker product and so yeah, I mean you can create all those experiences. It’s not going to be embedded in all the

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walls with the kind of luxury state system but you can certainly create that. So a lot of times we'll recommend those types of things I just mentioned for the kids' rooms, for secondary guest bedrooms where you don't want to have to spend a ton of money but you still want to give them some sound.

And then there's other manufacturers that make little wood enclosures where you put the Sonos speaker in it so it looks like a beautiful high end bookshelf speaker from a high end audio company, but it's actually a wooden box with a screen and the Sonos unit behind it. So there's other ways to kind of upgrade it without having a fully wired integrated system.

Tobi: Yeah, that's so cool. So someone like you, are you willing to talk to people with smaller budgets? How would we ever know that existed? If we don't know what we don't know again, should we just feel comfortable going into businesses or calling businesses, calling you or places in our own geographic areas like you and asking questions? Because sometimes that's intimidating. People are like, "I don't know if I have enough." I mean it even happens with interior designers. I might not can afford her, I'm afraid to talk to her, she would probably think that it was a silly question or wouldn't have time for me. So yeah, help us with that.

Joe: Well, I would love to help you with that. So I look at it like this. Myself and likeminded people like myself should always be available to answer a question because you never know if you may provide value to that individual and help them in their job. It would be vice versa, we all pull into a gas station and ask them at the counter, "Hey, my window wipers." And they can help you. So I think that's important. And plus, it's also good to build relationships because you never know where that may go. So I think asking questions is great.

Being around like-minded people is really, really important. And if you do reach out to somebody and they don't want to talk to you because you're not going to pay enough money for them, then they're not the right fit. And you could just kind of just keep moving on. But I think it's important to learn

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from each other. And I love to collaborate with people. And if I could help them and put my stamp on the job, great, but if not I paved it forward a little bit and I helped somebody and I answered a question for somebody. And I think that's great too, why not?

Tobi: Yeah, I love it. I mean it's wonderful that you're so open because I think the mission you're on to help people bring this part of the design into the project. I think that goes a long way to help us feel less intimidated by it and to feel more apt to want to partner with someone like you. Because again, a lot of times we don't know what we don't know, especially with technology. I think people can get so intimidated with technology, they can make a lot of assumptions that something's going to be hard or expensive or not for them.

And so I definitely do appreciate that you are so willing to have those conversations, yeah.

Joe: Thank you. I think it's important too from an interior design perspective is it's okay to ask a question. So for example, I was in a client's home and I saw a wireless access point for them to go onto the internet with Wi-Fi right over their piano into their living room. And I said to them, "Why would they put that there, was there any conversation?" He goes, "No, he told me to get good coverage, that's what you needed."

And I said, "Okay, but you have tons of millwork here, you have a bar, there's other places this could have gone. I believe it may have got installed there because they ran the wire there without knowing the layout and then they just put it in because they had no choice. And now you're stuck with this thing in your living room." So I was explaining to him how it could be moved [crosstalk]. So to me the wireless access points, because we all need them but there's ways to locate them where you know you're still going to get a good signal.

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There's a piece of software that we use that provide heat maps which show you the range of signal in the areas where you drop them onto the floor plan to make sure you have good coverage. You don't have [inaudible], yeah, throw one there, throw one there. No, there's a system behind it. But there's also manufacturers that make access doors where these can get hidden behind them. It's made of a light plaster where it still passes the signal through it.

And all you'll see is a small reveal, maybe you could put it behind a couch, things like that, where you don't have to have technology in front of you but it's still functional. So I don't think anything is wrong with an interior designer, to ask a question. Ask the AV contractor, "Joe, hey, why does that have to go there? Forgive me, just can you enlighten me?" And that way there's a reason behind that and you can say, "You know what, that makes so much sense, thank you so much." Or, "I don't really understand, is there any way you can go somewhere else because I have a piece of art going there?"

Tobi: Yeah, I think that's our biggest pet peeve as designers is that no matter how much planning you do it seems like the thermostat or the wireless or something ends up in the middle of a place that you don't want it to be and it's so frustrating, yeah.

Joe: Right. And that's why I think art walls, wainscoting, feature walls all have to be brought up early in the project, say, "Hey guys."

Tobi: It's so interesting, yeah.

Joe: So let's say you have an outlet and a light switch and a thermostat on a wall that's a feature wall. You kid yourself, [inaudible], maybe you could put a floor outlet in instead. So you have nothing on the wall. Or can you recess it in the baseboard? Or could you mud it in using a plaster recess outlet solution. There's a million companies that make them. Or can we even move the thermostat over and then maybe cut the register back for

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the supply a little bit further back just to give air to the room, to not ruin my wall.

And if it's not an important wall then no harm, no foul. But it's okay to ask, instead of just [crosstalk] figure it out because that's just what they did.

Tobi: Well, and it's so good to hear all of this discussion because I think that we are not necessarily thinking, I better tell the lighting designer about all the millwork and the trim work that's happening in every room. We're not necessarily thinking about that.

Joe: Well, if you don't think about it now. So what happens is the electrician puts all his outlets in, all his switches in, the AV integrator puts in his touchscreens and his speakers. And you might have a wood paneled ceiling in there. And now the joists, let's say they're six inch planks, now the speaker's not going to be centered with the planks. It's just going to look off. So the more you discuss everything ahead of time and bring these things to the table the better, because if you don't, all you're going to have is change orders to the client and they're going to get frustrated.

"How did you not know that we have speakers going in there? It's obviously our great room where we're going to have six speakers. And how did the contractor not coordinate this?" And all it's going to do is aggravate the homeowner, so [crosstalk].

Tobi: Yeah. And wouldn't it be a beautiful thing to be able to rely on somebody else to do some of these? Because we had the conversation earlier about staying in your lane. But the lane is sometimes really wide and really long for an interior designer. And so it's almost like delegation. If you can partner with someone to take a whole piece of the work off of you so that you don't make a mistake, how beautiful is that.

So I think we have to remind ourselves that you're actually there making us look better, making our project look better, making our job easier, being one less thing for us to get wrong or fail at because we've got your eyes on

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it in a different way and that's so beautiful. Because there's, as an interior design, I mean same for you, but hundreds of decisions in tiny rooms that it's so easy to forget or miss something like that.

Joe: And it's important to work together, so for example, the shelves that are behind you in your home there, if you were putting that in a client's house and you want to illuminate it. You should rely on somebody like me to talk about what items are available, what kind of tape, how wide is it? What is the profile of the channel that sits in, can it be flush, surface mounted? Do you put it all the way to the back or do you put it all the way to the front? Do you put it into the middle? What color temperature?

Are we going to have the shelves switched together or do you want to do half and half? Is there going to be a picture light above it for art? All that stuff should go into it and then don't forget something. Every trade on this job, every single trade whether it's an architect, electrical engineer, technology designer, lighting designer, interior designer, plumber, electrician, carpenter, floor guy. All of us have one goal, to do a good job for the client. It's not me against you. It's all of us to give the client what they are hiring us for. We need to do that together and that's it.

Tobi: Yeah, so good. Well, did we miss anything? This was a fun conversation, we covered a lot, anything else that you want to make sure people that are listening, designers or homeowners, anything else that they need to know?

Joe: I just think to sum it up, it's really important that the wiring trades which is my world for electrical lighting and technology, including landscape lighting, site lighting, outdoor lighting, work with the interior design team, the architecture team, as partners to work together to make it a great experience for the client. And not, we just design what we want, the architect just design what they want, you guys figure out the furniture and wallpaper and all that kind of stuff, [crosstalk], pull them all off.

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Now there's glue on the wall plates because the wall covering guy, all that stuff that we don't know about goes on can be avoided if we just work together. And don't be afraid to ask questions. And for contractors out there also, you should be excited to talk to the interior designers. Because I feel sometimes interior designers get looked at as afterthoughts. The whole house is built, okay, furnishing. It's more than that. You should be involved with the millwork, [crosstalk].

Tobi: Architecture, all those pieces, yeah.

Joe: All of that stuff, right, so yeah.

Tobi: Yeah. I love what you're saying and all the interior designers right now are saying, "Hell yes", to that too, because yeah, you're right, so many different players get brought in too late or don't get kept in the loop. And then a lot of times then it's probably you and designers like me that are left to kind of clean up messes or try to make the best of things and it makes our job so much harder than they have to be, so definitely.

Joe: Right. Then we're [crosstalk] for no reason and all that could be avoided. And I think what you'll find is a better collaborative experience between like yourself and myself. And that will only just make us both more educated, a better team to take it on to the next project and then that's it.

Tobi: Yeah, amazing. So if people want to learn more about you, I know you have a great website, are you on Instagram? Where can we find you?

Joe: The best place is just go to joeborress.com which is just my name .com.

Tobi: Okay. And do you mainly just work for your actual clients that you're working with in your area in California, or are you in other places, other states? Tell us a little bit about that, yeah.

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Joe: Yeah. So for us we work in Southern California to do design builds. So all the projects that we're involved in, we physically do the work. But outside of this area we just do consulting. So we'll just do consulting. We just did a job in North Carolina in Nantucket. So we have no problem working with anybody throughout the entire US. And can really bring everything that we can virtually to be able to design you the great experience. But we can't physically install it because we [crosstalk] stay in our area because we feel that if we control it with our team, we can deliver the best product.

But with 31 years of experience, when I work out of state I am setting up those contractors for success because I can speak AV technician, I can speak electrician, I could speak installer, those are my languages that I speak. And they like it because now they're hearing it from a like-minded person. I'm not just throwing out drawings and thinking, oh, God, what is this? It makes no sense. I'm setting them up for success as if I'm doing the work myself and it's great.

Tobi: I love it. So good. Okay, everybody go check out Joe's site. This was so fun. It was fun to be a little bit of ...

Joe: [Crosstalk].

Tobi: Thank you. Well, I didn't mean to interrupt you, but it's fun to be a student on my own podcast sometimes. So I enjoyed that. I knew I would learn a lot, I definitely did, you have me thinking differently, so it's working. And I'm sure a lot of the people listening are really starting to think differently just because of the things you're sharing, so thank you.

Joe: That's so exciting, thank you so, so much again. This was great.

Okay, so did you learn something there? I mean it's really true that we don't always think about bringing professionals in as early as we should. I know

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designers have been complaining about this for years, that people will wait until they need furniture to bring a designer in. Not knowing that part of the beauty of what we do is being involved from the ground up so we can really work on the interior architecture and millwork and layouts and design really. It's so much more than just decorating.

And so Joe's basically feeling the same way with the lighting industry. It makes perfect sense to me. So all of you designers out there listening, check out Joe, be thinking about how to move the lighting and tech piece up in your process. I'm going to do the same. And I'll see you all back here next week with another great episode of *The Design You Podcast*. Bye for now.

Thanks for listening to *The Design You Podcast*, and if you're an interior designer or creative looking to uplevel your business, I have something for you. It's my Build a Better Business guide, because burnout, rampant undercharging and the feast and famine cycle are epidemic in the design industry. And there's a better way to run your business.

So head to tobifairley.com/betterbusiness and get my manifesto and guide that will have you on your way to a business with more ease, more joy and more money. That's tobifairley.com/betterbusiness.