

Ep #270: Vacation Rental Design with Tiffany Cassidy



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 270.

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, so welcome to this week's episode. I'm going to tell you in just a moment about the episode and my wonderful guest and all the exciting things we're going to talk about. But first, I have to tell you that today is the day that Fairley Fancy launches, woohoo. We are so excited. We have been working really hard for six months to get this ecommerce store and our tiny little in person boutique live. The ecommerce launches today. The store opens tomorrow. And we know some of you are chomping at the bit to get your hands on things from both of those places.

So we cannot wait to see you online and in person. It is going to be so much fun. And I just want to say a big, big thank you to my team who has worked tirelessly to get this together and get it launched. I have an ecommerce team. I have an amazing consultant, Christopher and his team member Jessica, and then all of my team that has worked on it, Nicole, and Haley and we have two Haley's actually, but Haley our intern and Adrienne and April and just everybody. Everybody on the team has worked so hard on this.

And we are just so super excited. So Ellison and I are super grateful to them and we will be super grateful if you will go check out Fairley Fancy. Let us know what you think. I hope you find some things you can't live without. And it's going to be really fun. We're going to be launching things every single week. I'll be telling you all kinds of new things about the ecommerce. And I promised you an episode that was really about how I built it and what it was like. And that is coming, I promise, I just can't get to it quite yet.

So in the meantime today we have an amazing guest and we're turning our attention back to the vacation rentals business. I'm so excited about today's

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guest, Tiffany Cassidy. I've worked with Tiffany for a long time. She's been in a lot of my programs. We've done one-on-one consulting on things. She's currently in my Millionaire Mentorship program but she is a rockstar all on her own without any of my assistance. I've just had fun helping her take things to the next level for years.

So she has been designing luxury vacation homes and commercial spaces in the US Virgin Islands for an extensive roster of clients since 2002. So that's, what is that, 21 years now? And she helps clients in creating personal luxury residences and remodeling vacation homes to maximize the return on investment in the short term rental market. And I love Tiffany, her laid back Caribbean attitude. She does beautiful projects, her work has been featured everywhere from House Beautiful to some island publications.

She was a 2022 category winner for the HGTV Designer of the Year Awards. I mean she's just a rockstar and she has such insight into this vacation rental space that is different than some of the other conversations that I have about this industry, the segment that I knew you would want to hear, whether you're just a listener because you think it sounds glamorous and fun or whether you're wanting to dip your toe into the short term rental business, you need to know Tiffany, you need to know her resources.

You need to know her expertise so I'm going to be quiet and let you hear this fantastic conversation with Tiffany Cassidy.

Tobi: Hey, Tiffany, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm really excited to have this nuanced conversation about luxury vacation rentals, so welcome.

Tiffany: Well, thank you, Tobi, I'm so excited to be here.

Tobi: So why don't you tell everybody, I mean I've known you for years, we've worked together for years in a lot of my programs and private calls

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and coaching and all kinds of things. But why don't you tell everybody who doesn't know you as well as I know you, who you are, what you do, where you're located, all the fun stuff.

Tiffany: Okay. So I'm Tiffany Cassidy. I'm the principal and owner at Langnappe Interiors in St. Thomas. And we help the luxury vacation rentals owners redecorate and remodel to maximize their return on investment.

Tobi: I love that. And just to clarify, are these vacation rental owners also vacationing in their own properties, is that mostly what people want to do? They want to have a property and then kind of fund it by rentals or are these people just rental owners only and not really using their properties?

Tiffany: Okay. So there are a lot of different avenues for homeowners in the vacation rental space. And most of my clients are people who have been coming down here for years. They love the lifestyle. They do vacations here themselves either for a few short weeks a year or they'll come and spend three months a year. And they're renting because they want to make sure that the property's paid for and cared for. Because you can't really leave a home, especially in an environment like the Caribbean for nine months and just close it up and go away and expect that to work out okay.

Tobi: That's a great point. So of course as I said, I've known you for years, we worked together for years. I've loved following your work and your business and your growth. But I did have the treat recently of hearing you speak multiple times at the Vacation Rental Summit at High Point Market. And I learned even more about your particular vacation rental business and really more of the nuances of this industry because I've coached several people who work in this industry. But I haven't dipped my toe in it yet.

I'm just starting that process, totally different, not the Caribbean, tiny little place in Arkansas. But you've opened my eyes to so much and I think it's a conversation we should have for other people who are interested in this segment. So can you talk to us a little bit, you kind of started going there just now but can you talk to us a little bit about how diverse the vacation rental business is? Because I think when something becomes popular like

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this one has because of Airbnb and Vrbo and all the things, we accidentally think it's all the same thing.

And what I've learned from you is it's just as diverse as any other part of the design industry. So can you speak to that a little bit more in more detail for us?

Tiffany: It really is and can I just say that the summit was so much fun.

Tobi: Wasn't that so fun?

Tiffany: It was really such a treat to meet so many new people and just share knowledge and all that. And all the different perspectives there, from different segments of this industry. So there are so many segments. There are the investors. There are some people who do this scheme where they rent 30 apartments as a block and then they short term rent them out and make money off that. There are just people who want to own a home to retire in but they're not quite ready to retire yet so they're vacationing and renting.

There are the people who live on our island, there are people who live here on island for nine months of the year where their kids are in school and then they leave for the summer and they'll rent the house just for the summer. So there are just so many different places and ways that this is done.

Tobi: Yeah. And I think one of the things that comes up so often and may be a misconception that I would like for you to talk about, and it's not a misconception for all these properties but for some of the luxury products that you do. Is that it's all about the lowest budget, the bottom line, the cheapest possible because the owner only wants to get an ROI. And I mean there were definitely people at the summit talking about how they work with owners like that. Not something I'm interested in doing after having worked in the luxury design business for years.

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There's no part of me that wants to go back to how can I buy things at the cheapest possible rate just to make this look livable. So can you talk to us a little bit about what is the difference? Who is wanting the super budget stuff? And can you make a living? And can you thrive as a vacation rental owner who doesn't want to do that kind of budget and only ROI based work?

Tiffany: So I'm going to say my argument is that to maximize your return on your investment you really shouldn't go cheap. And I know people are going to be like, "That doesn't even make any sense." But okay, so think about it from this standpoint, every time you have to replace a sofa because we just get on board with can people stop planning to throw sofas in the landfill every three years because that is just not actually okay in my world anyway. But what if you bought something more quality because it's going to cost the same amount of money to ship it, deliver it, get it set up in the house.

Most people who are vacation renting don't live in the area where their rental home is so they're paying somebody else to do all this stuff. And then when you replace it, you've got to pay all that again and again and again and it equals downtime. The other thing I think it does is guests can tell what's cheap and what's not. People aren't dumb, they know. You might be able to get it to look really good for pictures when it's new but two or three years later if people are arriving and it does not look like the pictures anymore and it's a little on the shabby side, that's not going to get you very good reviews.

And reviews are worth money, there is value in that for sure. So I really think that there's a lot of value, and you're not putting \$2,000 a piece lamps in vacation rentals. But can we not put 29.99 Kmart lamps in there to be a little bit better so we get something that's scaled to the size of the headboard correctly and that sort of thing.

Tobi: Yeah. Well, and as a renter, so I'm just becoming the owner kind of side of this which is going to take us a while, we're phasing in slowly, my mom and I are doing this together. But as a renter and as an interior

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designer and hotel snob and person who likes luxury, that's the first thing I look at. We've been renting properties in the 30A Florida region for 20 years. And the first thing I do is go on and look at the interiors. And if I know I'm not going to feel as good in that space as I would in a luxury hotel or in my own house, then I'm not going to enjoy my vacation.

And call me snobby or whatever but I'm used to quality, beautiful things and I'm not the only one. There are many, many travelers who are luxury travelers who like things to be beautiful and inspiring. And we don't want the same imported looking pieces. I know we're hopefully moving past IKEA as we like to say in this industry. But even just the same cheap import pieces for all the case goods to hold the TV, the doors don't even really work on and it all looks exactly the same. And just some bad neutral not very comfortable upholstery. It literally looks cookie cutter.

And I'm not going to be the person to rent those properties. I can tell when somebody has window treatments and custom pillows and things that a designer would do. And those are the properties that I'm going to want to rent and I know there's a lot of people like me who are looking for the same thing.

Tiffany: And so to me the definition of luxury in a rental is not necessarily the brand names. It does not have to be [crosstalk], let's get past that. But could it be upholstery that doesn't feel like your car upholstery?

Tobi: Exactly, [crosstalk] carpet and yeah, scratchy sofas and yeah.

Tiffany: Yeah, and rugs that clearly came from Home Depot. So when we travel we rent Vrbo a lot because every time we go anywhere we're flying and we're probably staying a while. So I'm good with as long as it's clean and the location is convenient, I'm not going to be super fussy because I realize I can't always impose my design aesthetics on everyone else in the world. But the beds need to be nice. Please stop doing nine inch thick foam out of a box mattresses too. I see that they're cheap, that's great but can we get a comfortable bed, window treatments in the bedrooms that are blackouts.

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You do need to spend for the blackout because people on vacation want to sleep. Sometimes they arrive at 2:00am and they do not want to wake up at six with the sun. They come with their kids, they want their kids to take a nap on vacation just like they do at home. Nobody's going to have fun if the three year old doesn't nap.

Tobi: Well, and I love to think about, I presented at the summit more about kind of the journey that I'm creating of building a hospitality brand. But the thing that is really clear to me is when we're thinking about what segment to pick and I want you to talk about that a little bit more because there are different segments of this industry and kind of knowing what your lane is, for me I want to pick the segment that my competition is not all the other people trying to just make a buck or getting a return on investment.

I want my competition to be boutique hotels. I want to be that level of experience so that if you're not staying with me, you're not picking just the other cheap rental in town. You're staying with me because you want to stay longer or maybe you want to bring more people or I don't know if we'll be pet friendly but maybe. There may be a feature that you want, you want a kitchen, but you're going to feel as good and as cared for as if you were staying in a boutique hotel. So that's one segment.

But can you talk about, is that a dumb decision on my part? Is there a reason to pick a certain segment and how do we decide what our lane is? Because you were just sharing with me which you can of course share too here, I'd love for you to. Kind of you knowing even when things pop up that are potential projects for you, you knowing what your lane is. So how do we pick the lane and how do we stay in the lane?

Tiffany: So you can't be all things to all people. So in our studio I travel to High Point, all these things and curate a collection of samples and books and accounts of brands that fit our aesthetic. I feel like they're quality and good for our application and for our area because not all things do well in the Caribbean. And it's sort of a slimmed down product line in here that we work with. And that does a certain thing.

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So I was telling you earlier, I had somebody contact me a year or so ago about a 12 unit property on St. John and he needed the whole thing sort of a little bit of renovation, a lot of refurnishing, a lot of repainting. There is a lot to do there. And he's an investor, he has properties all over the world, 40 something of them he shared with me. And he's very tight on his numbers. He's like, "This is how much we spend per room and per square foot and this is how much we rent for and this is how it makes me money." He's very clear on that. And I have a ton of respect for that.

But his budget to me sounded like what I anticipated spending on only just the freight. So you have to know your cost as a designer and how you run your business. And because of where I am and I'm doing ocean freight and customs clearance and then freighting it over to yet another island within the VI, I know what that costs. And I just had a real honest conversation with him and I was like, "I'm not going to be able to do this in three weeks." And time is money for these folks and it's a lot of pressure. Just the freight process alone could be three weeks.

And he's like, "No, no, it could be a week." Like, "No, it couldn't be actually but okay." So he was not my person. And as tempting as it was to take that on, I knew that he wasn't my person. And I also knew that it was 100% not fair to take that on knowing that he has this budget and this expectation and knowing I'm going to go over it. What kind of business person does that? That's not fair. So I sent out that email, thank you for your time, it was great to meet you and I really just don't think I'm going to be able to meet your expectations because this is how we do things.

And I got back a, this is so disappointing email which they always kind of feel a little bit of a stab through the heart. But as my husband points out, he's like, "You can shake that off with a glass of wine now. If you took his money and let him sign a contract and then you got that email then it would be bad."

Tobi: Yeah, exactly, yeah. Well, and I think again, I want to bring this back to the difference of it being this vacation rental industry that has become such a hot market and such a buzzword for a lot of people. And I notice

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that what you just described is exactly what I would do and also recommend in high end residential design. I would say, if you can't provide what they're asking for, if you know, if they're saying they want to do something for 25,000 that you know costs 70, please don't pretend and just hope that surely they're going to have a bigger budget than they think.

But what I do notice about a lot of people entering this market and people I've coached in this market working with investors, not necessarily owning their own properties but working for investors, they feel so much pressure to meet the exact budget or financials that the owner has set forth. And so they start doing things that they haven't done in years and say they're a high end residential business, they wouldn't let themselves get in that position. But for some reason they kind of assume, well, I guess that's how this works, I'll go try to meet their budget.

And they create a miserable scenario for themselves, putting them right back in what they were trying to grow out of in luxury design from years ago. So how do we reconcile that? I mean are there people out there that do have more luxury budgets or that are going to let us guide them and what responsibility? I think there's always, sorry this is such a long question but I think there's also the piece that designers kind of become known for, not in a good way, just always blowing through people's budgets. And so where is that line?

Because I could see in one way we're trying to convince the owner of luxury quality, it's going to last a lot longer, all of those things, but they are trying to make money. And then where is it us just being attached to say our design style, our luxury work that's not appropriate for this market? Because I think there's both sides to this coin, right?

Tiffany: Well, there absolutely is.

Tobi: So the first question was, do they exist? Do they exist that'll spend the money? And then how do we know when to push and when to also pull back, I guess, on the budget?

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Tiffany: So yes, they exist. And I know that they're my people when they call and they say something like, "So we've been staying at the Ritz and we really like it over here. And we just bought this condo and we want it to be at least this nice but I really think maybe we could do a little better." You are my people, yes. Let me come to you. They're my people when they're not in a great big rush because my process is very thoughtful.

I got known early on for doing condos really, really well and just stripping them all the way down to the bare concrete and building them back into little, tiny jewel boxes, that's what we always talked about them as. So that's kind of how I found those people because people would look at those condos and say, "I had no idea anything in this complex could look like that." Of course it can. But also it's not going to be the cheapest thing on the block either. And then they started reselling those and the resale turns out is quite good when something's done well.

Imagine that, and the quality shows through because people, again, it's not just the renters, but if you go to resell it, people who come to buy it, they can tell what's quality and what's not also, [crosstalk]. So there are people out there, I think that's the first half of your question. Yes, there are people out there that do value doing things well. They see the value in the quality and the longevity and they are looking at kind of a bigger picture than the turn and burn.

They often also speak as, "We're okay with it not being rented every single week because we want to charge a little more per week. We'll have fewer people but we'll also have less wear and tear." Yeah, you're my people. So know your people and know your own business and your process. It's kind of like pants. If the pants don't fit, the problem, I don't think it's me. I need a different brand of pants to suit me.

Tobi: Exactly. I love that.

Tiffany: How many of us have tried on pants and gone, "Oh my God, my hips."

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Tobi: Yes, exactly, yes.

Tiffany: It's not your hips, it's the pants, just get a different brand.

Tobi: That's such a great analogy because that's kind of what I was seeing is all these people that are wanting to get into this industry all of a sudden think it's their hips because they think, they make the assumption that it is just about money. And so I've even been working with a couple of designers that have gotten into this industry and they're working on a course, and I was noticing when they were building the course that they were accidentally kind of engineering what they really do best, the design piece out of the course and kind of just making it about what the investor wants.

And I'm like, you've got to remember the investor already knows his part. What they don't know is how to do what you do. And I think that that is what we have to remember if we're going to partner with people also in this industry is yes, they want to make money. They want it to not be a crazy budget. But you also have a lot of expertise like you shared earlier about freight, about quality, about other things that you need to be brave enough to say because it actually does matter. And in the long run it can increase their return on investment, right?

Tiffany: Yeah. I literally was in a meeting with a client standing in the home that he's building a couple of weeks ago. And he wanted to do a certain thing and I just looked at him and I went, "I love you but no. No, we're not doing that." He was like, "What?" So I was like, "No, we're not doing that. You're not going to like it. You're going to want to send it back. Here are my reasons." He's like, "But how about this?" "No." "But how about it's this?" "No." [Crosstalk], no.

Tobi: That is so funny.

Tiffany: But I am a little pushy sometimes. But it's about, it's know your lane, you have to know your lane and you have to have the confidence because people pay you to be the expert. That's what they're paying for.

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They're not paying for you to find them the cheapest possible solution. They're paying for you to advise them about the best option.

Tobi: Yeah, that's so good.

Tiffany: And so I just lost my train of thought.

Tobi: Well, I think just...

Tiffany: I had a point, I had a point.

Tobi: It'll come back, it happens all the time. Usually when I start talking the other person's like, "Oh, yeah, I remember what it was." So if people are thinking about, okay, I do want to get into this, I've been thinking about it. And either I'm going to do one for myself, which I do think is kind of fun, it's what I'm doing. It's kind of fun for designers because we do have an aesthetic. And it's those of us who have built a brand and a following, it is fun to be an owner because you can bring people in and they can experience what it would be like to almost be in your own house or experience living the way you live.

But most of us, if we're going to do any of those at all, will be one or two, and really the bigger picture for doing this as a segment of your business is working for other people. So if we're going to work for owners and investors and we haven't dipped our toe into this yet, where do we start becoming that expert? What are the kind of main things that we need to know? Because you don't know what you don't know, you hadn't done it yet. And of course we have to work our way up and originally all of us who have a design business and we made all the mistakes early on.

But do you have some tips or some categories of things that we really need to get good at understanding that are different than a typical residential project?

Tiffany: Okay. Yes, absolutely. And I'll tell you that my husband and I did a rental property a couple of years ago. And we discovered the hard way that I like designing them and it came out great. It was a good experience. We

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don't like managing them and dealing with renters. We don't have that personality. We don't have the bandwidth so that was an interesting learning curve.

Tobi: So did you sell it or did you get a property manager?

Tiffany: We sold it because even with a property manager, I was like, "I don't want to think of it."

Tobi: I don't want to know who's in there. I don't want to know that they're messing up my stuff. I don't want to have to answer all their questions.

Tiffany: We sold it and it sold very well for us so it was a great experience all the way around. But if your property is being rented you have to realize as a designer that it's kind of like a three pronged thing. In residential you have one customer and that's the person who's hiring you, that owns the house, that's paying your bills, that's selecting the stuff. And it's very straightforward. And at the end of the day we go away and they have to live in it so they can have anything they want basically.

In this case they're not your only customer. Their guests are also your customers and they forget that, especially my people because they bought a house and they're looking at it as their retirement home. They're so excited because they're envisioning retiring in the tropics and all of this but it's not really your house yet.

It's a commercial property at this point and you need to consider commercial building codes in terms of railings. And please don't push that dining bench right up against a railing that has a four story drop on the other side. Somebody's five year old is going to stand on that. Don't do that. But they don't think that way. So you need to get them to think that way. Everywhere you look, looks reliable.

Tobi: That's great advice.

Tiffany: And tile selections because all our floors here are tiled of course. We don't really do hardwood or carpet ever. Our values are there for a

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reason. They're your friend and make sure that you document what you've chosen. We had a client who had a slip and trip thing. And the person who fell wanted to sue and it came back to the contractor and back to us. And I was like, "No, this was a responsible choice." And I didn't hear anything else about it so that's great but know that because they don't know that. It's a rare client who's researched those kinds of safety considerations.

And your third client is the housekeeping staff for management. I actually get a lot of referrals from housekeepers and I consider that to be a huge compliment. And people put a lot of stock into what their housekeeper has to say. So that's a great referral. And if you do things to make their lives easier, it's going to be better for everyone. Because if people are leaving at 10 or 11 in the morning and checking out at 3 or 4, I mean these people have to move. If you have to clean a whole four or five bedroom house in four or five hours, my God.

Tobi: Got to be efficient, yeah.

Tiffany: Yeah. So if you've got two stories there should be housekeeping upstairs and downstairs.

Tobi: Good advice, yeah.

Tiffany: If you have the option for a laundry stack up and a laundry stack down and a closet with the mop, bucket and the cleaners and the supplies, the less those people have to run up and down the stairs, the easier it's going to be.

Tobi: Yeah, good advice.

Tiffany: So people are like, "We'll just lock all that in the basement, it'll be fine." Yes, you can do that but also you can make it easier. One of the other designers [inaudible], showed a picture of how she had created the most beautiful housekeeping closet because she wanted those people to feel a sense of pride of ownership and with a little elegance in their world

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too. And they would carry that all through their job that day at that house and I think that's wonderful.

Tobi: Yes, I loved that too. Yeah, it looked like a magazine photo. And she said, "This is a closet and this is not for the guests. This is for the housekeeping." And it had these beautiful little baskets with all their supplies in them. And I mean it was so special, I loved that too.

Tiffany: And the cute little tags [crosstalk].

Tobi: Yes, labels and things, yeah, it was so good. I love that. Okay, so a three pronged approach. We have three clients, or we have way more than three because we have the customer. We have all the guests that are going to stay there and then we have the housekeeping staff. So really good advice. What else do we not know especially when it comes to even, I mean as much as I want to say, yes, I want luxury budgets for these things, you do still have to probably pay more attention to numbers than you do on a regular project.

Because on a regular project although you're looking at numbers and you know I love numbers, we've talked about this many times, the client does at the end of the day have, if it's just a residential, they're like, "Okay, fine, we'll go ahead and splurge on the thing because we want to." But splurging on the thing because we want to is not always going to be the best advice for the housekeeping or those guests. So how do we think about numbers differently in a short term rental than we would for just a client getting, as you said earlier, whatever they want?

Tiffany: Right. So you do have to be practical. You make it nice, you make it practical. As much as I love Eastern Accents and all their beautiful custom bedding, we don't use very much of that because it does need to be washable. That's going to put you into a whole business product line. And that by nature is going to be a little less expensive. So we might do a couple of custom throw pillows but for the most part we're making sure it's washable. I want to make sure that the spend is on things that really, really matter, we spend on the touchpoints.

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So we are going to spend on custom blackout drapery because that's something that just, that transforms the feel of the room and it's a user experience thing for the guest. I always recommend really good bed sheets too. I think the bedding, things that touch your skin need to feel really good, do white. Have you ever stayed at a Vrbo with brown bed sheets?

Tobi: The thought of brown sheets in general just makes my skin crawl. I know some people like darker sheets. My brother loves darker sheets. I don't know why. I'm like, "Give me all the white, all the clean, yeah, I want it to be just fresh looking."

Tiffany: I need to get into a bed at a Vrbo or a hotel and smell bleach. I mean that's what says clean to me personally. So we always do white. We choose fibers that dry quickly because again with the housekeeping when they go in and out of the dryer quickly, it's better.

Tobi: So what is that, what are fibers that dry quickly?

Tiffany: I love the bamboo fiber sheets.

Tobi: Yeah, I love bamboo sheets too, they're so soft.

Tiffany: They feel good. They dry quick and they do have a nice natural stain resistance, most everything washes out of those. We don't typically here because we're in the tropics, we don't do duvets on the beds, we'll do [inaudible]. So they'll dry in the dryer in one cycle. And I layer, multi layers so we have that, we have a blanket. We have a throw blanket. So if you're a cold sleeper or you just want to crank the AC to 65, if you have enough layers, but also if you want to sleep with the windows open because you're on vacation at the beach you can do that too.

Tobi: When I stay in hotels, it's been a trend lately in hotels to have either no top sheet and just a duvet that's covered in sheeting or at the very least just a sheet and a duvet and no layers and it drives me crazy because I'm a person who only gets a good night's sleep if I have weight on me. And so

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even if it's not about the temperature, I'm used to sleeping with a certain amount of weight.

And so I'm always the person digging around in the closet in the hotel to see if they have that extra blanket and pillows zipped up in a little thing that I can get out. And if not I will literally do things like put the bathrobe on top of me on the bed because I need weight. So I love to hear that you're thinking of all these different options, the same with pillows. It frustrates me, when I go to High Point, I stay at The Proximity and I know it's a green hotel but I know all of their pillows are poly and they're not that soft. And I want a pillow preference.

So I would love it if they put mostly poly and one or two down or partial down or something softer because I pay a fortune to stay for five days in those hotels and I don't get a good night's sleep. And so I love hearing that you're thinking through that because you don't just have to think about asking the question, "How does your owner sleep?" You're actually accommodating all kinds of different preferences, right?

Tiffany: Well, and that's the thing about the owner isn't your only client, it's all the rental guests are your clients. So we know as designers that we asked our clients, "So how do you sleep?" We don't get to ask everybody but we do know that there's a typical range just from our past experience of working with individuals. And we get to know people very well, don't we? We get to know all the secret little preferences.

So we will typically make a bed with two firm pillows and two soft pillows in the hope that you can swap around with your mate and find something that will work for you. We do, do poly though because I do feel like they have to be washable.

Tobi: Yeah. And so yeah, well, and I guess is there a version of the covers and zipper covers and all of that or not really, you could do that if you wanted to go that extra mile?

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Tiffany: We do all, yeah. We put the bed bug encasements on the mattress because you just need to. Waterproof mattress pads. I know that sounds really gross but we've found some, they're soft and puffy and they don't crinkle full when you roll over. It's not like little kid rubber sheets. But you just never know, it's just more hygienic that way.

Tobi: Yeah. So really again you are back in the mindset of a hotel, a hotel owner, not a residential. You can try to make it look as residential as possible by adding some things in, but really you're coming always back to that mindset of there's going to be a lot of people staying here. And we need to cover all the bases, yeah.

Tiffany: At the core of it you have to design it like a hotel. And I don't mean the aesthetics, I mean the functions, all the waterproof pillow protectors too. And just making sure things are washable. We have found pillows that even though they're not down, they really feel like down, they're really good.

Tobi: You'll have to send me a DM on that one. This is the pillow, Tobi.

Tiffany: Top secret pillow source.

Tobi: Yeah, so good, but what I'm hearing is basically and I mean this is true for residential too. But it seems even more important that you're basically creating a playbook that you can repeat over and over again for these things. It's more important than ever to do the research on the sourcing and get those go to things that you can come back to again and again for these properties, yeah.

Tiffany: And that is how we ended up starting the linen shop that's on our website because we do, do the exact same pillows, the same blankets, the same sheets, the same [inaudible], the basics in every house because they've just gotten good reviews for years and years and years. So we just started stocking tons of it here in the shop and we was like, "We ought to just make this able to be purchased online as well."

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Tobi: Yeah, it's so good, so smart. Okay, well, this has been wonderful and exactly as I thought it probably would be. But to just give a different perspective to people that there are luxury level clients even in this industry but even at that, it's not a free for all, do anything you want residential design. There's this happy medium place in between. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that comes to mind, that if anybody's wanting to start and get into or dip their toe into this?

Maybe one thing we haven't talked about is how do you find clients and partners in this space? I mean you find them, they come to you pretty easily, you kind of have a captive audience but any thoughts on that or anything else you want to share for people that are thinking about this segment?

Tiffany: So if you're thinking about this segment I would say like we discussed earlier, know your strength. Know what you do well. But some people really do, do I can set up your whole house in three weeks or less well. Some people do, that would absolutely give me panic attacks. I could not do that. It's not how I roll but there's absolutely a place for that and you will find people for that. And there are different business models out there as well.

Just because we are importing everything, bringing it to our clients' homes, setting it up, making the beds and all the things doesn't mean that's the only way it can be done. There are also consulting only models as well where you can support homeowners without having to do all of the things. There are eDesign business models. There's so much out there that if you're wanting to get into it, there are a ton of different ways to start. And I would say just start with somebody you know is your person and then just, yeah, go for it.

Tobi: Learn as you go, same thing that we did when we built whatever business model or part of our business, you still have to kind of fail your way to success a little bit, don't you?

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Tiffany: You do, but whenever you start something new you need to give yourself extra time and space because it's not automatic yet. You don't necessarily know. You're going to make a lot more phone calls to quiz vendors and stuff like that. So a little more time to think it through. And then if you're looking for clients, I have found that real estate agents have been a wonderful source of referrals for me as well as contractors. And just approaching those people with a mindset of how can you help support their business? What do they need that you can assist with?

And just make friends in general. Some of my friends who are real estate agents, I will, because I know them well I know they're not going to waste my time. I'm perfectly happy to go look at properties with them and a client and I don't charge for that. Let me just go spend an hour and walk through two condos with a prospective client of yours and we can talk about which one is probably going to need more work to make it what you want it to be.

Tobi: That's smart, yeah, smart.

Tiffany: And then guess who's probably going to get the job to do it?

Tobi: Yeah, that's so good. Are there any resources either of your own or that you've found out on the web for any people that want to read more on this or are there any great books? Have you found any great resources that are good, they may not exist yet from the design side? But for those of us who want to say, "Give me some more information", do you know of any good resources out there?

Tiffany: So if you just want more information on the different regions around the country and the sort of price points and how vacation rental is doing overall as an investment strategy, the Vrolio website is quite good. They're not necessarily...

Tobi: How do you spell that, V?

Tiffany: V-R-O-L-I-O. They're not necessarily the independent designer's friend because they're wanting to have somebody who owns the property

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book with them and provide the design and the stuff and the booking platform and everything. But because they have all that and all that data, they have a ton of data out there on, these people spent this much rehabbing their place and then their profit margin went up this much the next year. They really have all those numbers so they're kind of a cool resource.

Tobi: That sounds neat, yeah.

Tiffany: Yeah, but I actually did write a book. It's available on my website, *Vacation Rental Design Secrets*. And I go through room by room, this is how we think about it and this is what we do. And there's all kinds of resource guides in there for [crosstalk].

Tobi: So we can purchase that from your website?

Tiffany: Yeah.

Tobi: Okay, and what's that, tell us that information, your website.

Tiffany: My website is langnappe.com L-A-N-G-N-A-P-P-E.com.

Tobi: And then where else can we find you? Are you on Instagram? Your website, where's the best place to see all the inspiring things that you have actually created and worked on with clients and all that stuff?

Tiffany: Yeah. So we have a good portfolio section on the website and all of our letter of services is there too and of course the contact form if anyone wants to get in touch for consulting or anything like that. And we're on Instagram [Langnappe.interiors](https://www.instagram.com/langnappeinteriors) on Instagram. I post on stories every week. Wednesday is [inaudible] day. So if you want to see pictures of beautiful Caribbean scenery and houses that are under construction, tune in on Wednesdays.

Tobi: We do, we want to see that for sure. Perfect. While we're recording this, it's a Wednesday so I'm going to head over and see what you've got. So fun, amazing. Well, this was so great. I can't wait. I'm going to leave

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right now and go get the book myself because I know there is so much for me to learn in there and everybody else is going to be doing the same things. I can't wait to see how many people come after hearing this and get your book. But it's been a joy. Thank you so much for being here. I loved it and yeah, we'll have to do this again.

Well, when I get further. I'm only doing 10 things at once right now. And so I thought we were going to do the short term rentals first, ended up flip-flopping and we're doing my ecommerce store first then we're going to come back to the rentals. So they're kind of demoed, have new roofs but are sitting on hold until I can get back to them.

So whenever that happens, which could be months from now and I learn some things, then I'll have to come back and we'll have to have you come back again and we can have a whole other conversation. Because I'm sure this will be a completely different story from my perspective after I've been through the process.

Tiffany: No, it's so much fun because it's almost like a showhouse. Because you're not going to live there.

Tobi: Right, that's how I feel, yeah.

Tiffany: So you can do anything and you don't have to negotiate with yourself.

Tobi: I know, so fun. So good. Well, such a joy. Thank you so much again, I really loved this.

Tiffany: Thank you for the opportunity, Tobi.

Okay, friends, I hope you loved this conversation as much as I do. I'm as much of a, not only am I Tiffany's coach, I'm a complete student of Tiffany's. And as I said in the interview, I'm headed right this second to go download her book that she wrote, *Vacation Rental Design Secrets* and

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

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you want to get it too. So check her out at Langnappe Interiors. She tells you all the addresses of where she is, her website, where she is on Instagram. We'll link it in the show notes so you can find it too if you need it there. But I hope you enjoyed this conversation, I know I did.

And don't forget Fairley Fancy is live today, check it out. I hope you signed up for our discounts. And if not, you still can get a discount on your first order. We have all kinds of giveaways and fun things happening for the launch this week, this weekend and all through the month of June. So be looking for all of that and I will see you back here next week with another great episode of *The Design You Podcast* because they're always great. That's one thing I can promise you. So we'll see you a week from today. 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.

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