

Ep #274: Is This Really the End of Interior Design This Time? (Part 1)



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 274.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. A show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth and joy, here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hi friends. I hope you are well. I am well. I have so much going on in the best sort of way, launching my ecommerce store with my daughter just a few weeks ago has been so much fun on top of everything else we're doing. And it really has me thinking about revenue streams and creating and the design industry. And so today I'm bringing you the first in a series of episodes about that, about the design industry and about revenue streams. You all absolutely loved it when I did a series previously or I did multiple of them a year or so ago.

And I loved it too actually so I'm back with this series that I think is going to be a fan favorite for sure. And we're likely going to blow your mind in a few ways, maybe even multiple ways. So let's get started. I have on my thought leader hat right now. And I have to say that is absolutely one of my favorite and most natural hats to wear.

And many of you found me originally years ago when I was wearing that same hat, doing the same thing I'm going to do today. And that is thinking about, ideating, pontificating on the state of the design industry and where we may want to go if we want to be successful in the coming weeks, months and years. So I've heard over and over and over again from so many people that they found me back in 2018 or 2019 when I did a webinar called *Is This The End of Interior Design*.

And if I'm being honest, a better title would have been *Is This The End of the Interior Design Business or Interior Design Industry*. Because let's be honest, as long as people have homes, which will be forever, some sort of design and decoration will always be happening. There will always be a

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need to make homes function and as humans we crave beauty. And we love taking something and making it better. So there will always be interior design and a need for interior design.

But what I was really talking about way back in 2018 and 2019 was how rapidly the design industry was changing and how hard it was to make money at that time as a designer. Especially when the consumer in many ways was the person becoming our competition. It wasn't always about other designers. It was about the consumer being able to do all the things and get access to all the things and think that they were designers. So at the time more and more things were becoming available online.

We were starting to see people, even kind of bigger name people have lines and courses and sell things on Amazon. I remember talking about another Jonathan Adler and Martha Stewart both selling things on Amazon. Now you can find all sorts of things on Amazon, including some of the product lines I've created. And so things are really changing. Now, let's think about this for a minute because that was before the pandemic. If I recall correctly it was maybe three or four months ahead of the pandemic that I did that webinar, but it could have been a year prior to that.

I know it was in the fall, I should go stop and look this up but it was either fall 2018 or fall 2019. And I think it was 2019. So either way it was sometime between three and 15 months before the pandemic and I was talking about all of these things. And that means it was also prior to the horrible state of the supply chain that the pandemic created, which is still not resolved completely today. I don't know if it will ever be back to what we would call normal. And either way I was seeing how hard it was to stay competitive in the design industry at that moment.

So in that webinar I said something like, "We are just one major shift away, major occurrence, major thing, catastrophe", probably even I said, "away from the design industry going belly up." Now, little did I know that a pandemic was coming and how kind of interesting, if it was only three

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months prior because I don't have a crystal ball. And that was a major shift. But I was just looking at the things that had been happening, the way the world had been changing, what had been happening with procurement and how hard it was and how things were going direct to consumer.

And I was just spending time in the future at that moment which is basically today. Today is the future from 2019. And I was thinking about, wow, one other major shift that we don't even know what it is. And we could suddenly have the bulk of our income wiped away. And that is exactly what so many of us experienced at least temporarily during the pandemic. So since that time, since 2019, we did go through a pandemic where people suddenly couldn't travel.

Many people that we knew and loved became sick or sadly even died as a result of the pandemic. And that experience moved people towards valuing what really matters in their life to them at that moment. Most people had their loved ones at the top of the list, when they were thinking of what they valued the most. And they really started to think about value in general and what's important to them in a whole new way. And a lot of people had in their top three, that they wanted to be happier. They started to see life slowing down and they weren't so busy.

And they had time for hobbies and all sorts of things. So being happy for a lot of people really came to the top of the list. And that meant exactly that. It meant slowing down, not working so hard, not being overstimulated all the time or overworked. And many, many people decided to leave their careers or jobs and finally do something in life that really mattered to them, that they really enjoyed. And so began the great resignation. And we saw a huge change in our workplace especially in interior design because of that.

Small businesses, especially designers included have had a terrible time finding staff ever since the pandemic and the great resignation. And the timing of staffing challenges was especially difficult for designers because since everyone was stuck at home, suddenly they were valuing their

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environment more than ever. They were sitting around looking at how ugly things were, what projects they wanted to do. And there was a huge boom in interior design and renovation or even new build work.

And this lasted for almost three years, it lasted until now. And some people are still really, really busy. We'll talk about that more in a minute. But as the world started to open back up a few months ago or a little over a year ago, whichever part you consider opening back up and which it depends on where you live also. People started traveling again. And people's priorities shifted again. When we had been not able to stay home, all of a sudden we were forced to and for a while we loved it but then after we were forced to be there for years, people were sick of it.

The newness of being in our homes and valuing them were off. And people just were ready for something different. There was a new excitement about travel again. And our funds and our spending and our values shifted back away at least a bit from design to having experiences again, to traveling again. And I see so many people traveling right now.

The airport in Little Rock, which is usually not that busy, has just been packed. I've had to go a couple of places for work. And I'm like, "Where are all these people coming from?" And I can't find a place to park, which has never happened in my entire life. So while we have been shifting yet again in our thoughts about what we want to do with our time and with our money, guess what? We also started hearing the buzz of an impending recession which we have now been hearing about for at least six months.

And we've seen signs of that and if it's not a full blown recession we've at least seen a softening economy. And we've watched inflation and gas prices soar and then thankfully come back down a bit. But it's been uncertain. Uncertainty has been the name of the game now for multiple years. And so the thing that we are certain about over the last three or four years is uncertainty and that's about it. And that continues to be the name of the game in the interior design industry as well, uncertainty.

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But there are few things that I hear over and over again from designers that they're struggling with. And at this current moment I'm hearing more and more designers say their business is slow or at least slowing from what it was six to nine months ago. And they're starting to get concerned and I get that. Now, I don't want to say that everyone I talk to says their business is slow, it's not everyone. There are still people definitely that are busy but as a whole, I feel like the industry is in a bit of a slump at the moment.

And not just a slump but for the jobs that we are doing it feels so hard to do them. It's harder than ever to make money in a lot of ways in this business. And so I know that a lot of you are wondering what to do about the slump or the slowing or the softening economy. Those are the exact problems that I like to sit around and ponder as well. What do we need to do this time? Is this the end of the interior design industry or is this just another bump in the road?

And another thing that is coming and it's coming up a lot in conversation these days is this concept, this conversation, this impending arrival, and it's already here actually but it's going to be coming on a lot stronger of AI, artificial intelligence. And we wonder, is it going to replace interior designers? And if not, all of us, who of us and if not completely the design industry, which parts, and if so, how soon?

So I've been thinking about this a lot these days. And not just AI, but all of it, the change in the industry, the continued supply chain problems, the softening of the economy. Really in a lot of ways the brokenness, not only of the design business, that has been broken for a while and continues to be broken. But really a broken economy in a lot of ways. So I think of this and it might be a good time for you to start thinking of this and I think it brings us back to the question that I asked way back in 2019. Is this the end of interior design?

Or this time can we say, "Is this the end of the interior design business as we know it?" So that's a great question and it's not posed to scare you, to

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terrify you, although it can feel scary and terrifying sometimes. But if we're not looking at what's coming then we're going to be blindsided by changes. And so over the next few weeks in this series we're going to talk about several parts and pieces of this. But there are a few components in particular that I want to add to our case against the health of the design industry.

So really I want us to look at the state of the interior designer, the state of the professional. Back in 2019 when I talked about this problem originally, [inaudible] of interior design. I said that designers were on the verge of burnout. That it was actually not even on the verge, we were in burnout, in fact that it was rampant. And I also said that as a result of this burnout so many designers were craving a slower pace. And I knew that because people were flocking to my *Design You* program because I had been craving this not too long before that.

I had hit burnout at 39 and again at 44. So in that moment I was well versed in burnout for creatives and designers. And that is really part of the reason I launched *Design You* at that same time in 2019 or 2018 even. And my *Design You Podcast* that I had also launched around that time in 2018, I was talking a lot about this because I believed that designers were exhausted. And I thought that they didn't really know what to do next in their business because I was hearing that a lot and that probably was true. But I knew what they craved more than anything was more health, more wealth and more joy.

They wanted more time with their family. They wanted more time to slow down. They wanted more time to prioritize themselves. They needed more money to do so. They wanted to make more money than they were making in their business. And they were just really wanting fun and joy and creativity back in their lives. And can't we say the exact same thing today? Because the pandemic was hard, you all, it took a toll on us in and of itself. And a lot of us were already tired when we started.

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Now, we did get a slower paced life for a little while, which did help. It forced some of us to recuperate and to recover but it wasn't without the stress and worries of what's going to happen in my business. We did make changes personally, a lot of us and we swore that they would be for good. We swore we would never go back to the hurried pace of busy life. But isn't it ironic that we didn't stay there?

And this was true for me too, because when I had hit burnout at 39 and then at 44 but especially at 39, the first time I really hit it hard. And I did a lot of work to recover. And I took up yoga and I started taking care of myself and I slowed things down and I changed the way I charge. And I did all these things for myself. And I said that it felt so good, I would never go back to the hustle and the bustle. And then within the next five years I got five product lines. I had all kinds of work all over the place and nationally.

I was exhausted again and so I hit burnout again at 44. It wasn't quite as high the second time because I knew it was coming but it was interesting that I had said I will never go back to that other pace, yet I was pulled back into it. And I think that is what's happening right now. When things started opening up again we got right back in the saddle in a lot of ways, doing all the things, wearing all the hats. And so I hear a lot of tired people again.

I just spoke to another designer last week, who's thinking about changing careers or at least adding another skill set and life changing to the mix. Because they want another way of making money that feels less hurried than design and has fewer details. And you all, I know about 10 designers who have gotten life coach certifications since the pandemic, which I did the same thing back in 2017 for the same reasons, because I was so tired. And so at that time when burnout was hitting me I was able to start dipping into some other things and getting excited about something new.

Now, here's the good and the bad of life coaching, because in a lot of ways it can be easier to consult with people as a coach than it is to run a design project with a million tiny details while staying on time and budget. Design

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projects are really, really hard, so I will give you that. Consulting can be easier than some of the things we do when we're running full service design projects. But the bad news is that it's a whole lot like interior design in a lot of ways, the industry.

The average salary in life coaching is about \$40,000. I think interior design average salaries have maybe worked their way closer to 60 in a lot of areas, but still they're not dream salaries. Also during the pandemic a record number of people became life coaches and that industry was booming during the pandemic. So many people wanting to focus on their mental health but now there are so many coaches and that coaching bubble is sort of bursting a bit recently, it really is.

Because, well, for a number of reasons, that could be a whole other episode on coaching, but for a lot of reasons including a lot of companies started bringing mental health to the forefront of their businesses. And so they're providing a lot of things out there to the public in the normal benefits of businesses. And there's so many coaches vying for business of people because so many have come into the industry and they can't really charge enough to create the lifestyle they want.

And it's all the same stuff you have to do with design too. You've got to be a good salesperson. You've got to be good at running your schedule. You've got to go out and find people. You've got to show up online. You've got to be on social media, all the things you have to do to build a business in 2023. So there's a lot of what people would say, kind of that coaching bubble has burst. There's also a lot of anti-coaching sentiment in the world at the moment. And that's been happening for at least 6 to 12 months if not longer.

And the reason is likely that so many people got into that arena in the last few years and it's a non-regulated industry and many of the common practices for coaching and even online business, although online business gurus have been kind of ick, you all. And I've talked about this in the past.

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They've been salesy, they can come across as sleazy. A lot of times coaches are talking people into spending money they don't have for the promise of a better version of themselves or a better future.

And again, that's not to say there aren't great coaches out there and it's not to say that life coaching isn't life changing, it absolutely changed my life in so many ways. And so I think personally it's not just an anti-coaching sentiment, although that is out there. I think it's also that people in general have a fatigue from this whole idea of self-help. I know I hit that, you all, recently in the past few years. So for years I was one of the biggest proponents of becoming a better version of myself and I still do that in some ways, I'll speak to that in a second.

But I was always on a mission to become the next version of me, the better version of me. And I did that through buying books and courses and working with tons of coaches and reading more books than anyone I know, you all. I would have never in a million years believed that I would get tired of working on myself but in a lot of ways I did. So let me be really clear about this. I didn't lose my desire to work on myself personally in some ways. I love working to be more creative or working to see what's the next thing I'm going to build and who I'm going to become as that next version of me.

But I just basically stopped believing that I was broken and that I needed to be different to be successful. And maybe that's because I'm one to make changes quickly. And so after years and years and years of changing so many things about myself, I got to the place where I was like, "I'm kind of good for a minute." I've changed a lot. I've learned to manage my mindset. I've learned to slow down. I've learned to not take things so personally. I've learned to not care what other people think about me. I've done all the things.

And I had also done a lot of work in the high achievement, pushing myself, goal setting and I've accomplished a lot of things. But I also learned that

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that is not necessarily what makes you happy. So I started to realize that it might be kind of fun and refreshing to just like the person that I am for a while and see what happens. Now, I will say that I also do have a ton of tools to be able to do that now.

Because if I hadn't gone through all my life coach training and master life coach training and a whole lot of DEI training and DEI and equity centered coach training and all of that work that I've done, would I be ready to take a break from working on me at the moment? I don't know. It's easy to say I can do it now because, again, I've done a lot of work but it is impossible to say whether I would be here or not because I can only see through the lens of all the training and the work I've done. I can't really truthfully know what it would feel like if I hadn't done this work.

But if this shows you anything of what I mean I have not read a single book in 2023, you all, and it's almost the end of June, not one, not a single book, not even a fiction one. I started a couple and I was listening to them on tape, and they were fiction, they were not self-help. I have not listened to a single book on audio fully. And I have not read a page of a book all year, especially and including anything on self-help or business related.

Now, saying that is going to blow a lot of people's minds that know me because typically by now I would have read at least 20 to 25 books if not more, on how to become a better me or have a better business or all the things. And I have to say, it has been refreshing and freeing not to read this year. Now, I can turn anything into a job. And in the past when I would set goals for reading I would really kind of weaponize it against myself.

I would use it as motivation but I would also sometimes use it as almost like punishment to myself to not let myself quit a book I had started if I didn't like it, even if I wasn't enjoying it because I didn't want to be a quitter. Or believing that I had this whole huge stack of books which you all, I still have. I still have probably 100 books that I've bought in the last three or

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four years that I haven't read, even though I have read at least 50 books a year in the last three years, I've got at least 100 more that I haven't started.

And for some reason they're not bothering me to sit there unread now. It's a totally different version of me. And my point here is that I think not only was I tired of working on myself for a while, so were a lot of other people. And it's maybe because during the pandemic we had a lot of time to work on ourselves. And we might have even sort of burned ourselves out on that. We started doing lots of hobbies, doing lots of reading, taking lots of courses. I mean my courses and classes were booming during that time because people had time to learn. And maybe we're a little fatigued about that.

So let's recap so far what I'm saying. Here's the things I'm noticing. Design business is slowing for a lot of people, the boom we saw during the pandemic is starting to shift a bit, at least in parts of the country and in the middle and upper class parts of the consumer base. Possibly because of the fear of an impending recession, people are not spending as much.

Number two, designers are burned out again and moving into other fields completely out of design or at least adding another offering like life coaching or something different because they want a change of pace. And they're also in hopes that it will fix their revenue stream problems and that they can take a little slower pace, because they're seeing life slow down. I see a lot of designers also moving into being a coach or a business consultant for other designers.

And I did both of these things, you all, I've been a coach and a consultant for other designers for, gosh, I've been a consultant for 15 years now. And I've been a certified life coach since 2017 so I get it. And at the moment I see a lot of people moving in these directions but I'm also noticing that people aren't making a lot of money as life coaches or business coaches right now because again the consumer is kind of fatigued of being coached. Now, it doesn't mean that there's not a need for it, there definitely is.

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We still have lots of people in our programs and lots of people hiring us individually. But I would say in some ways it's more of a smaller group that are really all in and ready to go to the next level. And I see a lot of the sort of tire kickers and the people who were dabbling and the people who thought they needed help but weren't sure if they could afford it. So that kind of mid-range version of people falling away a little bit in wanting coaching or wanting programs.

So that's the second thing, so design slowing down for a lot of people, designers are burned out and looking for other ways and other things to do.

And then number three, the consumer, and we're included in this, you all, we are consumers of things including self-help. And I think the consumer, the general population is sort of tired or fatigued of self-help. So I've been noticing that for a while and I would say that that is true for me as well. So those are all things that are impacting the state of interior design and the state of the consumer but what else? What else should we be thinking about?

Well, I think one important factor is what I would just call the broken economy or maybe it's that we're in late stage capitalism. That could mean a lot of things to a lot of you. But the part I'm talking about is that most of us live outside of our means or if we don't, we want to, we want a lot of things. We want to consume a lot of things, but most of us live either at the edge of our means or outside of them. Most of us want things that are very expensive and we believe that having them is a sign of success.

And as designers, this brings two things to mind that are impacting our industry in a big way. First, is that many of us think of design as a luxury and even as designers. I know, yes, we believe everybody should have access to it, which we will talk about in a minute. But in their own businesses and our own work, we want the luxury clients. We want to work with those clients that can truly afford all the bells and whistles. That's what's fun for us. That's what feels creative for us.

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That's what we see as a sign of success is when we can finish entire homes and they have all the things and all the drapes and all the artwork and the rugs and accessories and they're magazine worthy. But if we're being honest, those clients that can afford that are not just in the top 1%. They're maybe the 1% of the 1% because they have to have money and a lot of it to spend, when we're talking about our fees ranging anywhere from for a whole house possibly more but at least 50,000 to 100,000.

And if they're going to just design a single room, when you add our fees and all of the product and things they're going to need to finish that, that's for sure at least \$50,000 to \$100,000 dollars per room. And not everybody can just drop 50 to 100K on a room. I definitely can't and I am a designer. And then the second part of this is that we've seen over the last five or ten years, maybe a little bit longer, what I would call that democratization of design or the idea of bringing design to the masses thanks to companies like Target and Wayfair and HomeGoods and Amazon and many others.

It has really changed the whole landscape of the industry and yes, we can go all the way back to HGTV and throw them into the mix, we're leading that charge of the democratization of design but it's definitely something that we need to think about. I'm not against it, but we want to talk about how it impacts us. So what this has done is change what the consumer's willing to spend on the space or a product, or at least, not every consumer, not the 1% of the 1% but kind of all the everybody else's, ourselves included.

What we're willing to spend on a space or a product has changed and also it's created a big gap in what is considered good design. And if we're being honest as the industry professionals, those that want to be at the top of our game, most consumers don't really know the difference between good and not so good design but we do, or at least we have an opinion on what we think that is. And let's be clear that the price isn't always the only indicator of good design. You can do good design with less expensive things.

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But when it comes to products and things like scale and proportion and true design principles, it's hard to make good quality and appropriately scaled products on the cheap, they just don't happen. But the client doesn't know the difference. And it can really skew their understanding of why design costs what it does. I see this even just on people commenting on my ads for my new retail store. They're like, "Why do these people sell \$300 vases when I can get the same things at a big box store for \$60?" But it's not the same thing and we know it.

Now, don't get me wrong, there are definitely some great dupes out there. And also don't get me wrong, I believe every human deserves access to good design and a beautiful nurturing environment. And the democratization of design is good for that, all of that. But it also changes our earning power as designers I believe. So we end up with two different kinds of buyers, those who don't know the difference in sort of what we would consider good and not so good design. And those who know the difference but can't afford the good version.

Now, I guess there's the third people which are the 1% of the 1%, that can get what they want. And we're all looking to work for those people as high end residential interior designers. And when I say that the second category, those who know the difference but can't afford it, when I say can't afford it, I'm not talking about the lowest end of the budget. I'm talking about and really I'm even talking about myself. I would fall into this category if I wasn't me I couldn't afford me.

And I know a lot of you have said that about yourself. I get my own design services for free and I get to buy product at wholesale or discounted prices or even get products given to me sometimes in exchange for promotion of those products. Which all combined saves me as a human, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars on any given space, and definitely hundreds of thousands of dollars on my whole house project.

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That the average person who's not a designer, who doesn't have accounts, who hasn't worked in the industry, who doesn't get wholesale or designer pricing, who doesn't get things gifted to them, all these things. They're paying or would have to pay for all of that at retail and they just can't afford it.

So this is so interesting because we've got those who don't know the difference in good and not so good design, those who do know the difference but can't afford it because they're not us, they're not designers. They're not getting it at the prices that we are. They're not getting our ideas for free like we give to ourselves. And then that upper kind of echelon of the industry and I'm going to call those the 1% the 1%, maybe it's not quite that high but let's break that down a little because it's pretty high.

I mean I come from a family, my husband, I mean not my family of origin, not my parents but my husband and I currently have two incomes. And we make both of us into the multiple six figures. We only have one child. So we both make a few \$100,000 a year. And we have one child only. And we even live in a state of Arkansas that has a low cost of living. But to think about, add our incomes, our combined income which is a really nice living.

And thinking about interior design, we would not have at any given moment \$100,000 in design fees and three or four or five or \$700,000 of cash sitting in the bank if we wanted to hire a person like me to do an entire house. We just would not, on that income level and we make a lot of money. So you literally have to make, in my opinion, more than seven figures a year to be able to afford the level of design that most of us consider as the type of work we want to be doing as designers.

And honestly it's probably a lot more than that. There's so many factors that go into it. We could say, "Well, you have to make more than \$1 million a year." But then also it depends on that person, do they have one child or seven children? Do they have loans for med school? How are they

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spending their money? What do they prioritize, what's important to them? There's so many factors.

But we do know, at the very least, to do the kind of work we want to do for clients, that can just write us checks for several \$100,000 at a time. Those clients either have to have a really high probably at least seven figure salary or come from a lot of money or have other sources of income that they're paying for their design. It's not even close to an average person.

So one of the reasons that the products and the services in the design industry end up so expensive in addition to the consumer not being able to afford it, is that whole supply chain process and how many different people are needing to get paid along the way in the supply chain. So as designers we're one of those people also trying to make money on the markup of goods. But the consumer demand is for lower pricing because as we were just talking about, most people are living either outside their means or at the edge of their means.

And the internet provides them plenty of companies who are willing to sell at or below what we can even buy it for as designers. And again it's really confusing to us and to the customer. It gives the designer a bad name in a lot of ways. It makes us look like we're trying to price gouge the consumer but this is all part of the broken system, you all.

The broken system, people living outside their means, people not being able to afford the price of goods and services, the way the smoking mirrors of the design industry and things like the internet that show all the luxury lifestyles that everybody has and everybody wants that. So somebody tries to knock it off at a cheaper price, all of it is a mess in a lot of ways.

And if we're honest with ourselves, there probably isn't even room for us as designers to make money in the supply chain, be in the middle of the supply chain for the mid to upper class consumer. Because that consumer can't afford the price of the goods and services, if we are also adding a

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markup on top of it. It's only those people at the high end, that client at the highest end, the 1% of the 1%, that can afford for us to make money on product, which again is so confusing.

So let's recap one more time. Design is slowing, designers are burned out and looking for other ways to make money that aren't so hard. The consumers are tired of working on themselves. The economy is broken in a lot of ways with most people living outside their means, that there's the democratization of design. It has confused the consumer and impacts the demand for our services at a price that we can't afford to work at. People want us for cheaper than we can afford to work.

And it has frustrated the consumer, especially the one who knows good design but can't even afford good design. So even though on paper they have a high income as a family like my husband and I do, they still can't afford to hire a designer for what the designer needs to charge. And also then afford all the product that they would want at the level they dream of. And this is at that mid to high end client. This is not even the lowest end of the supply chain or the lowest end of the market.

So even the mid to high end client is always looking for a way to get it cheaper or do it themselves or create a room over time, all the stuff. So as a consumer you're frustrated. But as a designer, really frustrated, I mean as a designer are you ready to cry uncle yet just hearing this list of four things because there's more. And I get it, I'm kind of yeah, me too. I want to be like yes, I'm ready to cry uncle too.

What in the world, how are we supposed to make a living, feed our families, do all the things in an industry that is all about beauty and luxury in so many ways? And yes, it's about function too and a lot of other things, but it's definitely about beauty and luxury. Yet everybody wants it as they should and deserve but it breaks the system. So in most ways, that really brings us to where I think the designer is today.

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And here's what I think. My thoughts are that most people in the design industry, I hear are thinking a few things. They're thinking, I need to change my business. They're thinking, I need better systems and processes because if I can just be more efficient then I can make more profit on the money I am able to charge those people that can afford me or that are working to afford me. They're also thinking, so let me be more efficient so I make more money on the clients I can get, which are that mid to upper range client.

But then they're also thinking, but I need better clients with better budgets. So I need some of those people, if not, a lot of those people at the 1% of the 1%. They're also thinking, I need a marketing plan or to be more visible because I'm not getting enough eyeballs on me. There's not enough people calling me. And that may or may not be marketing. It's a lot of other things probably, but we think that. We're like, "I need a better marketing plan. I need to be more visible."

Number four, they think, I need new, different or more, maybe new and different and more revenue streams to make more money. So we're all sitting there thinking that. We're like, I've got to be more efficient, I've got to make more profit. I need better clients with better budgets. I need more marketing and more visibility and I need new, different, better and more of them revenue streams to make money. Or sometimes we even think, I need the magic revenue stream. It must be that one thing that I'm missing that will be the thing that will finally change my business forever.

Now, any time we put magic, magic pill, magic revenue stream, magic employee, it's usually an illusion but that is what we're thinking about. And when we're thinking, I need that magic revenue stream, we're thinking, I wonder which one it is, is it ecommerce? Is it coaching other designers? Is it creating a course around design or the business design? Is it doing some kind of lower range offer like a designer for the day instead of just my high end services? Is it short term rentals or what a lot of you call Airbnbs? Is it something else entirely? Should I manufacture product?

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I'm here to tell you there is no magic pill, period, including the magic revenue stream pill, but I get you and I know what you're thinking. And a lot of you are like, "Oh my God, yes, that list you just gave, the one about I need my processes and my systems and the profit and better clients and all the stuff, yeah, all of those. And the list you just gave on the things I'm considering for revenue streams, courses, ecommerce, design." Design courses, business courses, coaching other designers, designer for a day, virtual design, short term rentals, all the things.

Yes, Tobi, I'm running all of those through my head all the time." And I want you to know there is no magic pill, which again, can be so frustrating. Now, does that mean we don't need new, different and diverse revenue streams? No, we definitely need them. That's part of being in business is that you're always willing to assess what the consumers want at any given moment and be willing to put things out in the marketplace that align with their needs. But a new magic revenue stream by itself is not the answer to all our ills.

So over the next few weeks in this series I'm going to talk about revenue streams more in depth. I'm even going to be teaching a three part workshop which I'll tell you about in a second that breaks down all those different types of revenue streams because I've been trying a lot of them. And I'm going to break them down and talk to you about implementing them, the how part. I'm going to tell you about that three part series in a second.

But I want you to be clear first that revenue streams alone won't fix an ailing business or as I often say, a new good revenue stream isn't enough to fix an old broken one. So you can't keep doing business that people don't really want or that you're priced out of the market for your current client and then just bring in a magic pill and it fix everything. So that is something to think about when you're thinking about new revenue streams. Now, it doesn't mean don't explore new ones, always do that.

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I'll be very honest with you in my three part workshop that I'm going to teach what it looks like to create and price and launch and afford to fund various types of new revenue streams. And all of those are things that you should be doing in business, even if you are booming with business right now. Over the lifetime of your business as an entrepreneur you have to be thinking about what else should we be considering selling, what are people asking for because the consumer is always changing.

And the internet is always making things available to them that they may not need from you anymore, so what do they need from you, that's a question you should always be asking. So yeah, just because new revenue streams don't fix a broken one, doesn't mean don't consider new ones. Consider new ones and take a look at the broken parts of your business. But being financially successful in 2023 involves a lot more than just a good revenue stream.

I think one of the biggest pieces it requires is being seen and being known because you can be the best at what you do and also have the best revenue stream. But if enough people that can afford you, don't know about you or you don't have enough credibility with their group or in their circles and they don't trust you enough to hire you at that level then you still won't make the money you need to be successful. So this is where I'm going to pick up next week in our series.

Today was more like the state of the industry, posing this question again, is this the end of interior design or the interior design industry, at least as we know it? Next week I'll help you get clear on what I think about what being financially successful looks like. And we can dig into that and really see what is the difference between being accomplished and just becoming burned out because a lot of us struggle with that too. And we have a lot of hurdles, you all, quite a lot of hurdles in front of us to be successful designers.

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We've mentioned them here today. We've mentioned the broken economy. We've mentioned the changing consumer. We've mentioned people living outside their means. We've mentioned supply chain. We've mentioned that AI is here and will be coming on even stronger. But in this series I'm going to break it down for you so that we can figure out where you want to go next in your business and what you are willing to do to be successful and what you're not willing to do. You get to decide.

Okay friends, so this was a lot today. And you have heard me talk about this stuff before but it's still a lot to bring it up again. And you're definitely going to want to take some good care of yourself while listening to this podcast and afterwards, while listening to the next several in this series. If this podcast freaks you out a bit, it's completely understandable. Being in business in 2023 in any industry is hard and in design is especially hard.

So if your head is spinning right now, my favorite tool for that is journaling, just getting those thoughts out on paper, getting them out of your head, be kind to yourself. Grab your favorite pen and notepad and brain dump all those thoughts, including the ones that are scared and overwhelmed and all those things. Write down your questions, your worries because it's not helpful to hold it all inside of you. That's the part that takes a toll. So get it on paper and then take some good care of yourself, let yourself relax, watch a silly TV show or do something that's relaxing to you, whatever that means.

And then meet me back here next week and we're going to pick this up again on the same topic. And we're going to work together on more solutions. If you already know, regardless of whatever else comes to you in the next few episodes that you do want to work on your revenue streams though then you can head to tobifairley.com/revenuestreams with an S at the end, revenue streams. And sign up for my brand new three part series. It's only \$297. It's not \$3,000, it's 297 for all three sessions, so they're less than \$100 apiece.

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But I want to break this down for you in this series of workshops. So we're going to have all three of them over about a two month period. They're not back to back. We're going to do one in July on the 20th, one on August 2nd and the last one on September 5th. And we're going to be breaking down various revenue streams.

We're going to break down some mindsets that you need to be able to implement them well. In these sessions we're going to get into the details of what business models look like for things like strategy days or designer for the day versus consultation models versus virtual interior design. We're going to cover courses and their potential and the cost to develop them. We're going to talk about ecommerce and its cost to develop and so many other things that you might be considering like short term rentals, consulting other people on those, doing yourself.

You might have considered coaching other designers or having a membership. We're going to talk about all of that in this three part revenue stream series of workshops. So if you want to sign up for that, again, head to tobifairly.com/revenuestreams. It's \$297 for all three. And if your first question is, but I'm on vacation on July 20th, will there be a recording? Or I have a client install on August 2nd, will there be a recording? Yes, absolutely there will be a recording.

Now, for those of you that can, I recommend you come live because you're going to want to ask questions. You're going to want to get access to me. Each of the workshops is going to be about 90 minutes long. And we're going to have Q&As in the mix of those, but yes you will have the recordings to watch over and over and over again. So come to that workshop, sign up for it if you're ready. I wanted to make it really affordable so that you can be there. So at less than \$100 per workshop, it's 297, or really right at \$100, 297 for three workshops. I want you to sign up.

So if you're ready, head to tobifairley.com/revenuestreams with an S and tell your friends to sign up. And take care of yourself over the next few

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days. I'm going to see you back here next week. We're going to tackle part two of this series. Okay friends, bye for now.

Thank you for listening to *The Design You Podcast*, and if you want to discover a new path to success in the interior design industry, then join me for my three-part training called How to Create Additional Revenue Streams. In this training I'll teach you the strategies to launch innovative income streams and free you from the limitations of traditional design services. Don't miss this opportunity to revolutionize your business and thrive in today's competitive landscape.

Grab the training series now to prepare you and your business for today and beyond. Go to tobifairley.com/revenuesteams.