

Ep #276: E-commerce and Branding with Abbey McGrew



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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 276.

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 friends, so I'm going to interrupt our four part series on Is This the End of Interior Design Really, sort of, not exactly, not a detour. I'm just running on vacation for a week and I'm going to pop in this great interview that I just did with Abbey McGrew. So Abbey's the founder and creative director of *Wayfarer Design Studio*. And she's known for her heart led approach to design, not interior design, graphic design, brand design, all the things. So she helps thoughtful ecommerce designers bring their brands to life through visual identity, packaging, and web design.

And she believes that great branding is more than skin deep and it's always about finding the way to weave that deeper meaning into every detail. And I completely agree. So what Abbey's really good at is helping people with ecommerce. And yes, we have an episode coming up in our four part series all about ecommerce. So I'm going to let you enjoy this interview, it's really good. And then I'll be back next week with part three of our series on revenue streams and the following week with part four on ecommerce. And all of this is going to make perfect sense together.

So thanks for letting me run on a vacay with the family. I'll be back really soon. In fact I'll be back next week but you'll never even know I'm gone because you're going to enjoy this great brand new episode with Abbey McGrew.

Tobi: Hey, Abbey, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm excited for this conversation, all things branding, all things ecommerce, all the things that are literally on my mind at this very moment. So you have divine timing and I'm so glad you're here.

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Abbey: Yeah, thank you so much for having me. I am, yeah, I'm really thrilled to be here too.

Tobi: So fun. So why don't you tell everybody a little bit about you, who you are, what you do, and then we're going to get into some juicy stuff today.

Abbey: Yeah. So I'm Abbey McGrew. I am the founder of *Wayfarer Design Studio*. That's my business and we specialize in branding, packaging, web design, specifically focusing on product based ecommerce businesses and yeah, we just, your audience is designers, so I'm sure they're going to relate. I just love details when it comes to design. Of course I love aesthetics, I love an elevated style and yeah, that's kind of what we're known for and what we want to create for our clients is bringing that to their branding and their website and their packaging experience.

Tobi: Okay, perfect. So I was just about to ask that. So what you typically create for people I'm sure is an overall kind of overarching brand that then you trickle down to what exactly does my website look like, what exactly does our product and packaging look like. Anything else that you're usually working with for people besides websites and packaging?

Abbey: I mean it can really expand to whatever their unique needs are. For people who are really marketing themselves heavily on social media, we'll design social media graphics for them. If they're trying to pitch themselves to retailers or investors, we might design their pitch decks. Yeah, it's a pretty wide variety of things that we can create but we like to tailor it to whatever they need most and makes the most sense for their business.

Tobi: I love it. And you're talking directly not only to me but to a lot of my audience. And even a lot of the members of my masterminds and these are the very things we're always talking about. And so there's the strategy side of this but then there's the actual, who am I going to get to translate me onto paper, translate me onto a website, translate me into a product. And that is a completely different skill set than interior design. And I'm not sure all interior designers fully understand this. So let's start there.

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What is the difference? Because I mean we know what we like, we know color, we know form, we know scale but that's not being a branding expert, that's not being a graphic designer, that's not being some of those other skill sets. So can you talk to us a little bit about what you see is the difference and maybe what we need to keep in mind when we're on the client side of this journey that best helps us, I guess, articulate, would be the right word, articulate what we're looking for and how to achieve it?

Abbey: Yeah. So yeah, we've worked with quite a few interior designers actually before. So I've gotten a lot of experience understanding how to make that relationship work well because our areas of expertise do kind of overlap in ways. But yeah, I think with branding specifically, I mean website stuff maybe is a bit more obvious in how it's so different because there's coding involved, there's lots of functionality and text stuff involved. That can feel very different I would say from what you all do.

But with branding specifically, I think as a branding designer I have to really get in the mindset of the consumer. Of course I need to think about what the client wants but I'm also really thinking about the consumer and also really thinking about the details of how to communicate a specific message and communicating unique selling points and brand values. And I think that can get a little bit different from designing a room or designing a home. There's some more, yeah, consumer and competitor analysis that's going on there.

It's very detailed. It's much more complex than just the aesthetics. I also think that as interior designers, you're creative people, you're creatives for sure. But designing a logo, drawing out a logo and stuff, that might end up feeling a bit more overwhelming for some people than they might expect at first because it's not easy. Even as a designer myself, it can be difficult to, let's say if you're designing a monogram or an icon that you're going to use in your branding.

It takes a lot of work and a lot of editing and refining to make something feel simple and straightforward and not like you're trying to cram way too much stuff into this really tiny little thing. So yeah, those are some main, I

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guess, points, that I would say are what I feel make my approach to things different. And it might make it challenging for an interior designer trying to do it themselves.

Tobi: Yeah, I love this conversation because the day we're recording this, I was just on Instagram on a live earlier today talking about how everybody thinks they're an interior designer and I'm sure everybody thinks that they also are a brand or graphics designer. And it's so funny. And I think as designers listening, surely they can relate that we do accidentally sometimes think either we should be able to do what you do or we know how to do it and we're experts in it.

And it's just kind of the same thing as all the people who think, they look at our work and think I should be able to do that. And they don't get scale and they don't get proportion and they don't understand products and they don't know the millions of product companies that we work with and what fabrics look like and feel like. And what the seat of a sofa is and that's kind of what, in your world we're not constantly looking at fonts. We don't know that this one is so everywhere all over the place and not that sophisticated even though we like it.

We're not sitting there in the brains of the consumer going, "What would make them pick something up off the shelf?" And I think this is such an important topic. I'm always a fan of using professionals for everything whether it's a branding expert or real estate agent. We've got to remember that those people and us included that stay in our lanes have so much expertise that people just forget we have, don't even know is a thing. And sometimes accidentally dumb down our process and think that shouldn't be that hard when there's a lot more to it than what we think, yeah.

Abbey: I think that with the interior designers that we've worked with, a lot of times they can envision what they want and they know what they like because that's their designer side that can very easily, yeah, have something in their head.

Tobi: Have an eye, we have an eye, yeah, a vision or an eye, yeah.

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Abbey: But it's the execution part that ends up being difficult and also sometimes being able to separate their personal preferences maybe from what's really going to be the most aligned with their target audience or how they want to stand out from competitors. Yeah, that's where I think the graphic designer can come in and really kind of support those areas where maybe they don't have those skill sets.

Tobi: Yeah, and I think elevate. I tell all of the people I work with and have for years and it's been many different people over the years, but whether it was branding or social media, any kind of graphic design, anything, copyrighting. I always say, "The best people I work with are the ones that make me look like me but better, sound like me but better, pull out all the nuggets and polish me up so it's kind of my glamor shot version of, but real, not smoking mirrors." But really showing and highlighting the right stuff because we don't always know what that is sitting on the other side as the client, yeah, so good.

Okay, so let's start to talk about this whole world of ecommerce. I leapt in, so I was telling you before we started recording, I had a retail store from 1999 until 2009. And so now it's been 14 years since I had one and I just opened a retail space but mostly ecommerce with a tiny boutique, June 1st. So all of this, it's pretty new to me. I mean I've been working on that for probably eight or nine months, but in the grand scheme of things, so much has changed in the 14 years. There was no ecommerce in 09 really to speak of and now everything is done there for you.

And there's Shopify and there's social media and there's all the things. But just because you can grab an app and throw some product on does not mean that you really understand the whole concept of branding and ecommerce. And branding for packaging and what's going to make people buy and stand out, you stand out. So let's start there.

I don't even know where to start exactly because I don't know what I don't know but where would you say we should start if we either have ecommerce or we're thinking about it in this whole conversation around

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branding? And what's going to make us successful and make us sell and stand out?

Abbey: Yeah. Well, I would say, branding is definitely going to be kind of the foundation when you're building a website, that's for sure the first step. If you don't like your branding you probably shouldn't waste your time getting a website up yet because you're going to want to change it immediately.

Tobi: And can you real quick, don't lose your next thought but can you just for a second explain in your words what you mean when you say branding? Because I know people think a lot of different things but just so we're on the exact same page, when you say branding, I think you and I are on the same page but let's just make sure so that everybody knows what we're talking about.

Abbey: Yeah. So branding or a brand identity, I would boil it down to just the way that you identify your business and kind of the things that people are going to recognize as your business. And so if we were going to create a brand identity for someone, the essentials that we feel like they really need to have are a primary logo that says their business name, usually at least one secondary logo. And usually that's going to be a smaller version, especially if you have a really long business name which I feel like a lot of interior designers do because it's usually their full name.

Tobi: Tobi Fairley Interior Design.

Abbey: Yeah. So you usually want to have a secondary version of your logo that's a monogram or an icon or just something that is smaller so that you have some flexibility in how you're applying it. Because yeah, maybe your full business name is going to fit on your website header at the top of your website. But what about on a sticker that you're going to put on your products or on your social media profile picture, it's not going to be legible if it's only that small. So you need something smaller that you can use in those areas.

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And then you're probably going to have a brand color pallet, usually two to three signature colors, you might have more, I feel like interior designers typically [crosstalk].

Tobi: Yeah, we want all the colors, yes. I think I have eight but there are a few primary ones, yes.

Abbey: But yeah, and then fonts, some specific fonts that you have chosen that you're going to use consistently across your website, across any social media, any marketing and any packaging or print things that you might have, business cards, whatever. You've got to make sure that you have some fonts that are consistent, you're not using a different font on everything that you put out there. So yeah, I would say those are the essentials that make up a brand identity.

Tobi: So back to our conversation that I interrupted you of what is branding. What should we be thinking of when we start? And you said, first of all before you go build a website and not just a website but an ecommerce website, a sales website, all of those things. Because for an interior designer, when we say website, yes, we're selling services, but the other kind of sister opportunity there is to sell product and that's what I usually mean when I say ecommerce. So I'm sure that's what you mean too.

So besides we need to love our brand or we need to redo our brand because we're not going to like the website once we launch it, what else should we be thinking of when we're in that ecommerce head space?

Abbey: Well, I think the second thing is choosing the right platform for your website because there are some different options out there that you could use. I'm not sure which one you're currently using but Shopify is a big ecommerce platform and that's what we specialize in.

Tobi: That's the one we use, yeah, that's what we use.

Abbey: Yeah. Personally and as someone who does this for a living I think that Shopify is the best option for ecommerce. It can get tricky especially

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for interior designers because you likely have two sides to the business. You have the service side and then you have the ecommerce side. So I could see why some people might opt to use Squarespace instead because it does kind of give you more flexibility in building out the pages for your service side part of the business and it does have an ecommerce side to it.

You can add products on there and sell them on Squarespace but if ecommerce is going to be a big part of your business then Shopify is probably going to be the better option because the back end of it is just so much more in depth and specifically built for ecommerce. So you're going to have a lot more features and capabilities on the ecommerce side if you use that platform.

Tobi: Yeah. Well, Shopify is the only one I know now and this is new to me but there are so many things that I love about Shopify. I mean it's fun and it's easy but even just the integrations to TikTok and Instagram and all of those things are so easy and look so great. And so we have loved, although I know no other option, I have loved Shopify. I haven't been frustrated in the whole process really, which is kind of saying a lot because there's a lot of different places that things could go awry.

There's a lot of details. I totally underestimated the amount of work that goes into creating not just the branding but just the entire experience and the back end and everything of ecommerce. So one thing that we did and I was thinking about it when you were talking about how people might choose a different platform is for my ecommerce I started a sister brand, and I have a reason for it. I started it with my daughter who's 18 and her dream is apparel and so we started it together.

And she's like, "I don't want it to just be Tobi Fairley Home. I don't just want to work for you. This is our collaboration", which I was totally up for. So we made a sister brand. And not everybody's going to do that or they don't have a good reason like I did necessarily. So they may just have their interior design business, Tobi Fairley Design and Tobi Fairley Home or something like that. And it could all be under one umbrella. Do you have

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any comments or thoughts or is there anything for them to keep in mind when they are choosing?

Should it be the name of their business? Should it be different? Is it okay to have sister companies under an umbrella? What are your thoughts on that as far as what you see being the most effective?

Abbey: Yeah. I mean I would say it's definitely up to each person because there might be really good reasons to keep it all together, might be really good reasons to split it. I would say it definitely depends on your future goals for both of those things. One thing, and this is coming from my personal experience because as a designer I have my studio that I run, *Wayfarer*. But on the side I also have educational resources that I create for graphic designers, a course and templates and things like that. So I kind of have these two sides to my business.

And I've sort of ish separated them kind of on social media but they all live on the same website. And so that's one way that you can do it. However, I will say if you're considering fully separating them, just be prepared because then you're going to have two separate businesses and that means twice the marketing, twice the customer service.

Tobi: All of that, yeah.

Abbey: Sometimes I think in my mind when I first kind of separated things, I thought, it's still going to be fine, it's still all just through me. But it really took a toll because once I realized, now I have to plan double the amount of marketing content. That's not fun.

Tobi: Yes. I will second all of that. And for years I have spent years telling people to have one Instagram account, even to infuse their personal Instagram account into their business one because people love to see real people and then you don't have to keep open two things. Of course sometimes people want a separate one for privacy reasons and whatever. But then when I made the decision with my daughter to start this sister company, everything you just said and I knew but still kind of forgot like

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you're saying, the amount of work that it requires to populate a social media for two different sites.

And then the other thing is that it's not necessarily true on interior design although posting more often can be helpful, what I knew going in and now really understand the magnitude of is if you're not posting daily pretty much on ecommerce you're not selling on ecommerce. And everybody I know that is successful at ecommerce says the same thing. They're like, "If I take a break we don't sell anything and the minute I show up and I'm like, "Here's this lamp or here's this dress or here's this candle", we sell at least two or three of them."

So yeah, any thoughts around that? What do people have to be prepared for besides just populating the social media and all of those things potentially daily, what are the other hidden things that you've seen that we need to be aware of if we're going to go into that ecommerce space?

Abbey: Sorry, I thought of one other thing, maybe it's important to bring it up.

Tobi: Yeah, jump in. Yeah, jump in.

Abbey: If you think that the audiences for your service side and your ecommerce side are going to be very different people, then makes sense to separate them. But if you feel like the audience, it's the same people hiring you for services also want to buy the products that you've curated, then maybe it makes sense to just keep everything connected because you're still speaking to the same people.

Tobi: Right, yeah, true.

Abbey: So yeah, and thoughts on yeah, social media.

Tobi: [Crosstalk].

Abbey: I think a big thing with ecommerce is that yes, you're right, the social media and marketing side, very important to keep people coming to

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the site, keep people engaged. But I think just in general you have to kind of get creative to think of other ways to keep people on your site. Social media can't be the only avenue for people getting to your site. And yeah, that's something that we always work with, with our clients in the beginning is kind of helping them brainstorm and not just think about people are going to land on my site and instantly want to buy stuff because most of the time that's not true.

A lot of people, I feel like I have heard this stat before of people needing to interact with the brands seven times before they feel ready to buy. So you really have to take that seriously. So one thing that we always ask our clients when we first start working on the website portion is, "Okay, let's say someone comes to your website and they're not ready to buy from you, what's your Plan B? What's your plan C? Where else do you want to take them on the site? And how can you encourage them to still interact with you in some way?"

And some ideas that we might throw around are, "Are you going to use a newsletter?" Which, I would say newsletters are very important for ecommerce especially now that social media, it's just not really reliable anymore with algorithms and everything. But email can be really, really effective because that way you're not worried about, is my post going to show up in their feed? You're landing directly in their inbox. So email is definitely something that you should be considering.

It might seem like a very daunting thing, but in Shopify you can set up lots of automations within your email marketing so that it doesn't feel like you have to send an email to them every single day or every single week. You can set up automations, but yeah, focusing on stuff like email, incorporating quizzes, having blogs. There are lots of ways that you can still keep people engaged and on your site, even if they're not ready to buy yet. And yeah, that's kind of the key, keep people's attention.

And hopefully creating a website that even if they're not ready to buy something, they still feel like they're getting some kind of value out of it. And that's going to gain their trust and make them more likely to come back

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and buy in the future, or if they are ready to buy already, maybe it'll make them want to buy more stuff and increase the average order value for you, which of course is something else that you would like.

Tobi: Absolutely. And so I love thinking like this. It's kind of my favorite thing to do, exactly what you were just talking about, the brainstorming, the ideas, the creative. But just to dig a little deeper into that idea of whether they buy or not, making sure they're getting value. I think that's one conversation when you're thinking about an interior design site or thinking about a blog or something like that. But how does that differ when you think about ecommerce?

Because I think some people would feel confused there, but just to kind of ask a question around that. Is it something like maybe teaching them something or showing them something or showing them a mood board or showing them how you would put a room together? Is it that kind of thing actually living in the ecommerce space too? Yeah.

Abbey: Yeah, absolutely. So another question that we ask our clients, first of course, with websites, we ask them, "What are the top three things that you want people to do on your website?" And we'll list that out. And it's always, buy from us, work with us, whatever, sign up for our newsletter, the typical things. But then we kind of flip that question around and say, "Okay, what do you think are the top three things that your target customer audience wants to do when they visit their site?"

Because their priorities might be different from your priorities. And so you want to make sure that you're addressing both through your website. And yeah, that's again going to be a key to keeping them on the website longer and helping them feel more engaged because yeah, you've really got to get in the mind of your customer and think not just about like, these are products that they might like so we'll show these first. But think about what's actually leading them to come to your site in the first place, is there a problem that they're struggling with?

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They know what they like, the style of home decor that they like, but they have no idea how to put it together. So yeah, creating, curated mood boards, giving them some advice through blog posts on how to put things together. That's something that they'd be really excited to find. And then leads them into buying something. You could put together rather than just listing out a bunch of products that they buy one by one, create bundles of products where you want to style a shelf but you don't know how to pick out individual things to put on that shelf.

Here's a whole bundle of things that we have already picked out. You can buy them all at once and then put them on the shelf. Things like that, thinking about problem solving for the customer. That's what's going to help.

Tobi: I love that. Yeah, that's so good. And for me, this has been coming up in my own brainstorming and thinking, and I've talked about it a little bit on some other podcast episodes that I've done, solo shows and things. But one of the things that comes to mind when I think about something like that is even when the customer's not necessarily investing in design services maybe for a number of reasons, maybe the economy has changed or whatever. But they can style one shelf and they're willing to spend the money on that.

Or even when AI comes along farther and starts to replace parts of our business but the people still need the product. I love thinking of these types of tools like selling tools and what would you call those? Assets or actions that would move the client closer to a sale that you're not necessarily thinking about in the regular interior design business because you're thinking, why would I give them that for free? Why wouldn't they pay me to learn how to style a shelf?

But your motivation can really change if you're trying to sell product by itself as opposed to trying to sell interior design services. Yeah, so good. Let's talk about blogs. A lot of people for a while thought blogs were dead, they were kind of over them, people had moved on. And I mean, I even thought so too for a while because I had a blog for 11 years and then now I've had

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a podcast for almost five and really kind of stopped blogging when I replaced it with podcasting.

But I've been hearing and seeing and believing that blogs are back. They definitely have a place in what we're talking about. So can you talk a little bit about the power of blogs and how we can think about them when it comes to ecommerce?

Abbey: Yeah. So I think that we've gotten so used to with social media, the very short form content, one in the way that it's a quick video, but also that it's up there in a feed for a couple days and then it basically disappears and no one really interacts with it ever again. But the power of blogs is that those are things that they have a longer lifespan, people are more likely to go back and read old blog posts.

I myself do it as a consumer all the time and especially with sharing blogs on different platforms like Pinterest. Things getting re-pinned and re-pinned and re-pinned. That can work really well with just, yeah, generating ongoing passive traffic essentially to your website. For me, I have a blog post that I did probably a year or two ago that had a little quiz in it. It was a color palette quiz so that you could answer some questions about your business and then it matches you with some predesigned color palettes based on your brand values and the personality behind your brand, stuff like that.

So that's something I wrote a long time ago and I pinned it a few times and it's gotten re-pinned so much and it's still to this day, year and a half or so later, every single month the highest traffic on my website. There's people just continually going to that single blog post. So it's really powerful. People will go back to blog posts again and again. And yeah, that's what makes it sometimes more worthwhile to put the effort into writing a blog post versus writing a bunch of quick little posts on Instagram that maybe get some traction for a day or two and then they're done.

If you can put that amount of time into just writing one blog post, it could draw people in for years.

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Tobi: Absolutely. Love that. I remember when I used to blog all the time, after all the things I blogged about for years the number one blog post that was like, exactly like you're describing year after year after year. It was a blog post about what type of sofa cushion should you select, firm, soft, down wrapped, all the stuff about sofa cushions and it went just crazy viral. And it wasn't necessarily just specific to me or my design aesthetic or anything. It was just very much a value to people.

And it was so funny, when we would look, we'd be like, "I wonder what our most favorite blog post is these days." And we were thinking something amazing with some of our work or a reveal of a before and after. And it was always that damn how to pick a sofa cushion blog post but it drove a lot of traffic to us, which then of course caused people to take different actions, so that was fun.

Abbey: And clearly that was the common problem that people were having. So that's where, yeah, you can use that to be like. "Okay, obviously this is hitting a chord with people. What other ways can I hit, tug on that string to speak more directly to those people? Yeah.

Tobi: I'm sure I could repost that same blog post today or something very similar and it would probably get the same kind of traction because that part of the consumer need has not changed. They still don't know, in fact, maybe it's gotten worse because there's so many choices out there of what to buy. And they still don't know what kind of sofa cushion they need and how for it to not sink or not be too soft so they can't get off of it or not be too firm or all or all the things. Great point.

Okay, let's talk about packaging. Packaging and I'm sure a lot of packaging also translates to even just color palettes on the ecommerce site itself, something that's going to draw people in. Are we trying to create an emotion or what's the sort of goal that we want to be thinking about when we're designing? And I guess honestly this could even go to the concept of curating product for your site. What should we be thinking about that gets people's attention?

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Abbey: So when it comes to product packaging, whether it's going to be on a shelf or it's going to be on a website, main things that we're going to think about or questions that we're going to ask are, "What's going to be the main motivator for a person to pick this up or to put it in their cart?" And that's kind of different for any type of product. Sometimes it is just the vibe and maybe that relates more for interior design or home decor type goods, it's the vibe.

And so we're going to mostly just focus on making the packaging design, the box or the bottle or whatever, really making that match the aesthetic that they're looking for. But for other types of industries, if we're working with a skincare brand or a beauty brand, maybe the vibe is a motivator for the customer but sometimes it's more about the ingredients or it's about the results. So that might be something that we are focusing on a little bit more, of course we want it to look beautiful.

But we're going to be more focused on is the result of that product, like for skincare, if it's something that is supposed to brighten your skin, we want to make the packaging feel bright, maybe we use a really bright color. Or we want to make sure that that language that explains this is what this does is very visible. That's one mistake that I see a lot of people make with packaging actually, is a lot of people just want their logo to be the biggest thing on the box or on the bottle or whatever.

But sometimes, especially if you're not a huge brand, people don't know your name, so them seeing that as being the biggest thing, that doesn't really mean anything to them yet. Them seeing clean ingredients or, yeah, brightening, smoothing, whatever the result is that they're looking for, if they see that first, that's going to make them want to pick it up first. So yeah, you've got to think about those types of things. What's their main motivator and how can you make that the focal point of the packaging design? Is that helpful?

Tobi: Yeah, absolutely. Then it makes me wonder, and I know there are, but I'm just curious of, what's standing out to you right now. What are you seeing in 2023 and it may, I'm sure it's specific to category but not always,

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what are you seeing as people's main motivators? Is it sustainability? Is it price? Is it that they want to feel a certain way? What's standing out to you right now that we really want to be paying attention to that the consumer is caring about more than anything in 2023?

Abbey: Yeah, sustainability is definitely a big one right now or being mindful about what's going into the product, whether that's the ingredients or how it's made, those types of things are definitely stuff that consumers are looking for more right now. So if that is something that you can highlight about your products, do it for sure.

I also think just storytelling is becoming more of a motivator right now because we are, I don't know, as consumers we connect with stories that we feel are experiences that we feel are similar to our own experiences. I was just listening to a podcast actually with the founder of Brightland, the olive oil brand. Have you seen it? And the founder was talking about how the whole reason she decided to start the business was because she was having weird stomach cramps after eating certain foods and she didn't know what it was, she thought it was cheese, she thought it was gluten or whatever.

And then she ended up changing out the olive oil that she was using, using better quality olive oil and that seemed to help. And so on their website she shares that story and she says all the time she'll have people who have bought her products and say, "I was having that exact same problem. And then I started using your products and it helped." But it's like they connected with the brand and with the product because that story was told on the packaging, on the website, on their social media.

So yeah, any kind of story that you can share to show like, hey, this is why I made this. We want the same things. That's why I created this for myself and for you. Yeah, it can be really powerful, and especially in today's world where it feels like there are new brands popping up every second, almost. I think that that's what they need to lean into because there are trends that come and go, especially aesthetically. But whatever your unique story is as a founder, that's always going to be unique to you.

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So however you can weave that into your brand, it's something that's going to always be true and be on brand for you regardless of what colors or font styles or patterns or whatever are most popular and are trendy right now.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that. And I do know everybody has many stories, but a lot of people don't think they do. They look at other brands and they're like, "That is so cool", or, "I love that." I've had so many people reach out and say, "Oh, my gosh." Either they have a business with their daughter or even their son or they dream of that. I've gotten a lot of response just from the fact that Ellison and I have done this together. But is there a question or two that we can ask ourselves when we're trying to get into our story?

Because a lot of us are like, "I'm so boring and I'm just me and I don't have a cool, I never overcame a big illness or I didn't have a big epiphany or I didn't have a midlife or early life crisis", or whatever. How do we get to the stories?

Abbey: Yeah. So we do a full hour and a half, two hour call with our clients in the beginning to get to the bottom of this. And some of the questions that we ask, of course, going to ask, "What made you first come up with the idea to start this business?" And sometimes, yeah, the story naturally comes out from just writing that out, remembering what moment you decided to start the business, what was going on in your life? And why did you decide to go for it? Those types of things. It might naturally come out by talking about that or writing that out.

Sometimes though, I think the story, maybe it's not your personal life story. Maybe it's more the story that you're trying to create for your customers in the end. So we'll always ask, "What's the problem that you're solving for your customer?" Or, "Why are they wanting to buy this product from you?" And there's usually a very obvious answer. I have an example if it's helpful.

So we worked with a couple and they were starting a retail store where they were going to have minimalist style children's clothes and goods because they live a very minimal life. And so we asked them, "Why would people buy the clothes that you're going to have in your store?" And they're

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like, “Well, they just like the way that they look. They think they match the style that they like and that's how they want to dress their kids.” And we're like, “Okay, why is that important to them, having this minimalist style or having a minimalist closet for their kids?”

And they say, “Okay, well, because they have less options, the closet is less cluttered. It's going to be easier to get their kids dressed in the morning. It's just simpler.” And so then we ask, why. Again, “Why is that important? How does that impact their daily life?” And they were like, “Well, maybe their kid can dress themselves in the morning because they don't have as many clothes and everything goes together or it just takes less time to get your kids ready in the morning.” And then I'm like, “Okay, well, what's the impact of that?”

If you just kind of keep asking. “Okay, what's the obvious problem you're solving or the obvious benefit of people buying this thing?” And then asking, “Why, why, why does that matter to them? How does that impact their life?” And in the end, we got to if you're not taking as much time to get your kids ready in the morning then that means you have more time to be together as a family to eat breakfast around the table, to play a little bit in the morning before they go off to school. And that's what's really important to people.

And that's a story that's easy to sell. And so whenever we built their branding, we were able to kind of add in these little symbols and stuff that could help tell that story of less clutter means more family time and more fun and more life with your kids, precious moments with your kids. I hope that's helpful, but I feel like that was a really good example of how we were able to kind of get to the root and build this story that isn't just here, buy our pretty clothes. But here's what life can be like because you bought these pretty clothes.

Tobi: Yeah. I love that so much. And I think that really crosses not just ecommerce but the service business side. And I think even thinking of all the designers listening who struggle to stand out in design right now and it feels really crowded at times and it sometimes feels like it's like the end of

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the industry. Or our biggest competition can sometimes be the consumer just doing it themselves. I think what you were just saying is so important of a story to be telling across the board. And I don't see a lot of people doing that necessarily of really helping people understand.

I know it gets overused, the whole idea of the why and I think we've all heard a million times about Simon Sinek and read his book probably 50 times but I think that that gets overlooked or kind of dumbed down for people. And it's important to keep coming back to, don't you think, always of the why this service? Why pay this amount of money? Why get this product? Why don't you buy this particular product? All of those things, yeah, is coming to mind.

Abbey: Yeah. And I think I understand, I feel like with design sometimes it can be difficult, yeah, because people will try to do it themselves and it might not be an obvious problem solution type of thing like skincare or something. But yeah, I think that kind of doing that as an exercise and really trying to get into the mind of your target customer and probably interviewing some of your past clients or past customers could be really insightful to ask them, yeah, "How did life change for you after you worked with me or after you bought this thing?"

Or, "Why did you specifically choose me?" I think that doing target audience interviews and surveys and stuff, if you find it really hard to figure that out on your own, it can be useful to get an outside perspective to try and get to the root of those things.

Tobi: It's so good. Okay, well, this has been so insightful. I'm sure we could talk about this forever, but is there anything really big that's standing out in just the realm of branding or ecommerce or this conversation that we didn't touch on that you want to make sure people are thinking about before we wrap up?

Abbey: Yeah, I mean, I think just avoiding trends and copying, probably. Yeah, I'd say that's the biggest, I don't know, takeaway that I can give, especially in an industry like interior design, where there it is crowded, and

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there are a lot of people. and a lot of people have similar design styles, but you shouldn't try to not, even if your design style is similar to someone else, of course, you don't want your branding and your website to look exactly the same as them.

Tobi: Yeah, that's so good, yeah. And that's exactly what hiring a professional can help you do so that you're not going, "I want to look just like this person." Because it's kind of amazing how, and a lot of us have been guilty of it, in all kinds of different ways, copying when we don't even know we're copying. We're inspired by something or we loved the look of something. And I remember hearing, I'm trying to remember what book it was in, and I can't think of what it is right now.

But there was a book that I read at some point in the last few years that was talking specifically about how a lot of times you don't know you're copying. You even think you came up with the idea, but it's kind of stored in your long term memory and you didn't really remember that you had seen that somewhere. So it seemed like a great idea. And I think that using a professional who is looking at other brands, who's looking at the things you say you like, but interpreting your version of something similar is so important, yeah, for sure.

So good, awesome. Okay, well, if people have loved this conversation and if they're like, "I want to talk to her, I want to get a quote from her, I want her to help me with my branding or my ecommerce or packaging or all the things", where do they find you?

Abbey: Yeah. So our website is wayfarerdesignstudio.com. And I'm assuming you'll put that in the show notes so people [crosstalk].

Tobi: Absolutely, yes because it's not like a Wayfair, the furniture company, Wayfarer E-R. And yes, we'll definitely put that and we'll tag you on social media as well.

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Abbey: Fun fact, when I went to trademark my business a few years ago, the trademark lawyer realized that I probably shouldn't do it because my name was similar to Wayfair.

Tobi: Yeah, the online furniture.

Abbey: Yeah, mega online store because they had a trademark for marketing stuff. And so he were worried that maybe they were going to, if I tried to trademark my business, which is obviously not the same as theirs, but they would still try to come after me, which is so funny. But yeah, website wayfarerdesignstudio.com. And then we're also on Instagram.

We share lots of tips on there and yeah, if you're looking for resources on our website, if you go to wayfarerdesignstudio.com/resources we have lots of resources on there listed, free Instagram, story shop button graphics, a Shopify launch guide. If you're trying to set up something on Shopify and you're overwhelmed and don't know where to start, we have some resources that can help with that too.

Tobi: Amazing. Well, it's a huge job. So they're definitely going to be overwhelmed if they're trying to do it on their own. So everybody, head over and get those guides. And this was so fun. Thank you so much for being here. I loved it and I can't wait to go check out all those things you just said, and I know a lot of people will be checking you out too, so thank you.

Abbey: Yeah, thank you. Thank you so much.

Okay, I hope you loved that. Check Abbey out. Keep your brain on revenue streams and ecommerce and all the things we can do to revolutionize our design businesses. And if you want help with that, head over to tobifairley.com/revenuestreams and check out my new three part workshop. It's 297 for all three parts. We're going to cover everything you can imagine from virtual design, what you might call eDesign, but I'm going

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But if you can come live, amazing. I'll see you there. You can ask questions. It'll be interactive. We're going to have a great time. Okay, friends, I'll see you back next week when I'm hopefully rested. Although I'll tell you then when I get back about my vacation, it's not exactly a restful vacation, but it's definitely a playful one. Okay, so stay tuned for that. I'll see you real soon. Bye for now.

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