

Ep #282: Create a Profitable Online Course: Encore with Linda Holt



Full Episode Transcript

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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 282.

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, okay, so today we're having an encore episode. I'll tell you about that in a minute. And it's an important episode and I wanted to run it again and I'll tell you why I wanted to run it again. But first, I want to check in with you, it is August, we're at episode 282. We're moving into the last part of 2023. I'm officially an empty nester. I left my child at college, well, I left her there about 10 days ago but then went back because we went through sorority rush, which is a whole other thing, a whole other trauma and we've made it through that.

And now school is starting and I know a lot of you don't have college students that you've dropped off but you have your kiddos going back to elementary school and middle school and high school and you mamas and a few daddies are listening and you're ready to get back into fall and I know exactly how you feel.

So I will be bringing you lots of episodes coming up about everything from that experience of rush, probably, I think I'll talk about that, it was kind of traumatic, moving your kid to college, also traumatic. And then what the next part of my life looks like and you know I'm always loving to reinvent myself over and over. And today's episode is really about a person who has done that exact thing too. So here is why we have an encore episode today.

We are launching in just a few weeks, later this fall, a new group of students, 10 students, 10 only, in our Online Course Incubator. So we tried this last year. I'm always experimenting and seeing what works and we ran a group of students through the first ever Online Course Incubator from

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January until June and it was phenomenal. And we have so many amazing students that have created courses and a few are still finishing their courses because this stuff takes time, you all. And I'm going to be bringing you some other episodes with some of these other students in the coming weeks.

But I wanted to bring back my interview with Linda Holt because Linda is amazing and she has reinvented herself multiple times in her life. And just a girl after my own heart, always chasing what her most recent creative kind of inspiration and idea is and so I wanted you to hear this episode again with Linda. So I'm going to be quiet. I'm going to go recover from starting the new empty nest phase of my life, figure out what the heck I'm supposed to be doing after being gone for almost two weeks while you listen to this amazing conversation.

So let me first tell you about Linda. Linda is a former professional photographer and now as you'll hear in the podcast, she's technically, at least for the time being, a former interior designer. So Linda is a creative that has really moved into the world of course creation. And I have been along for the ride and to coach her and to really help her with this process but I can take no credit for Linda's skills and her talents because she has been doing this work for a long, long time.

So she has merged her creative eye and her aesthetic appeal into not only being a photographer who has worked with over 5,000 celebrities and actors and models as one of Boston's top commercial headshot photographers. And then had a 10 year career as an interior designer and now is teaching designers and creatives how to use their smartphone to take their own photography of their projects.

So enjoy this episode where Linda and I get into the whole process of course creation and niching in your course creation and all of the hurdles and all of the successes and everything that goes into creating her online course for interior designers and stagers and creatives that's called

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Smartphone Photography for Interior Designers. And I'll be back on the other side to remind you about a really cool thing we are doing right now in our programs to help people create their own course just like Linda has done, but in the meantime enjoy this fun and exciting conversation.

I'm so proud of Linda and I'm so happy to have been a part of her process but here's my interview with Linda Holt.

Tobi: Hey, Linda, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. This is going to, I can tell already, going to be one of my favorite episodes because we've known each other for a long time. So this is really fun but before we get into all of the details why don't you tell everybody who you are and I mean you do something different now than you used to, I was going to say what you do. But that's probably kind of like a multipart description. So give us the details, fill us in.

Linda: Okay, thank you so much, Tobi, first for inviting me on your podcast. I was so excited when I got your email. Let me tell you my background. I was a professional photographer for a little over 25 years. And I always had the love of design and on my weekends I was always painting walls, making drapery, going to flea markets. And then when we had the big recession in 2008 my photography business really tanked and I was also burned out at the same time.

So I went back to school, just a little two year program for interior design. And I didn't even have my very first client yet but I had been following your blog, I couldn't wait every week when it came out to read your blog. And you advertised that you were going to have a program, I think it was called the A to Z Camp. I think I must have been your first sign up. I was there. And it just opened my eyes to a whole world of what was out there. I made connections of other designers who had been in the business for years that I'm still friendly with.

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I really just had that whole exposure to what the world of interior design was. And then I worked in design. I took every single thing you offered. I then went to your masterminds. And you had another camp I went to, was always so exciting. I remember being picked up in a pink limousine.

Tobi: Yeah, a Hummer limousine.

Linda: It was a pink Hummer. The whole thing for me was like out of body because I was a photographer, wore blue jeans and a black t-shirt every day. And so this was a whole another world. I'd have to think about my wardrobe and I would go out there. But anyway, you really gave me so much insight into how to start my business. So I had been working for 10 years in full service design but I kept coming back to, my friends would say, "Your pictures are so good and can you help me?" And this was with my smartphone.

So I started just helping them out and then I started hearing, "You should do a little class. You should teach a course", over and over. And you had suggested that I do that as well. But it took me two years of thinking about it. Then it took really the lockdown during COVID to actually have me do it. And then from there it was all about promoting it and figuring out all of the parts and pieces that go on to making an online class.

And now I just recently went down to consultations only. But even I found the consultations only was sort of eating into the time that I really need to properly promote and market my online class which is smartphone photography for interior designers. So now I'm actually just even backing off of that and I want to just go all in, at least for six months and just do my online class and see how that all goes.

Tobi: I love it so much. So this is so fun because I think this is sort of how creatives thrive, exist anyway. We love to try things and morph into other things. Because our brains are always coming up with what we could do next. So I love that you went from photography to design. And I can't

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believe that 10 years of design already went so fast, that you were doing full service. And now you're really, what you're saying is you're now a full-time course creator which is so exciting. And I've been teaching people now, let's see, I started Design You five years almost.

And within the first, I don't know, four or five months was when I started talking about courses and digital marketing because I was realizing that so many people in the creative industry didn't know about the possibilities of that. So I guess that's four and a half years of telling people, teaching people why they should have courses. But what you and I were talking about briefly before we got started is just a lot of people can know they want a course but they don't know how to make a course. They don't know where to start, it feels intimidating.

A lot of people think I'm not a teacher, there's all these thoughts. And you had a similar experience so can you kind of talk us through what that was like, from the moment you're like, "I do see that I could have this." And that sounds like an amazing idea but you said for a couple of years you just kind of sat on it. What was that whole process like?

Linda: Well, there were so many components of that. I think the first one was just technical. I had no clue, how do you even do this? Do I do a video? Do I do a book? Do I do it live? I mean just even figuring out what the best method was going to be and then not knowing anything about the tech. I didn't even know how to use Canva at that point. And I was trying to make slides and PowerPoints which I struggled with even learning that. I really knew nothing so was struggling with all the tech part.

And then I did finally decide which platform I was going to use because I just did so much research. That I spent so many hours just trying to learn, learn how to do a course. I mean writing the course was simple for me but it was 90% figuring out how to do it and 10% doing it, is what I found. Because it sounds great, make an online class. Okay, how? I didn't know

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the first thing, Tobi, not the first thing about doing it. You had in your Design You which I watched three times, a digital, what was it called, digital?

Tobi: Digital Marketing for Creatives.

Linda: Digital Marketing Creative and I watched it. And I'm like, "Okay, kind of get this. I kind of get this." But it was, you didn't go into detail, detail of the technical stuff. But I understood what funnels were which I'd never even heard that word other than a kitchen funnel. So I started learning all the lingo that goes into making the course and marketing the course. And then I wasted a ton of time. I think I had imposter syndrome, how can I do this? Even though I'd been a professional for 25 years, I still had imposter syndrome, I'm not a teacher. All of those doubts came in.

I'm too scared. I can't do this. I don't know enough people. And I had every mindset issue imaginable. And I also once I started going and I actually did create the class, I figured out Canva and I figured out how to do it all. I had no idea how to then take it to the next level which was selling it. And I wasted, I was telling you earlier, thousands of dollars on hiring the wrong VA to help me or going down the wrong path and just making a lot of mistakes. And it's from point A to now it's been about four and a half years of struggle, it really has.

Because everybody wants to do this because we're hearing, make money online. And we all know design is changing. And it's getting harder and harder to make a really good living or a stress free living doing interior design with what's going on. And every designer I know has a wealth of valuable information to share to the public or to other designers. But they're so busy working in the business that they don't have time to do the creation of the course. And even if they do the course it is a full-time job marketing the course.

So that's why I decided, I can't do both. I had one foot in the design with clients and one foot trying to market the class and I'm like, I have to go all

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in one or the other. I chose just to commit myself for x number of months. Let's go all in, no clients, just do the course and see where it takes me. And I feel I've come full circle. And I've combined the two things I've been passionate about my whole life really which is design or decorating and photography. And in my 60s, Tobi, I've found my sweet spot.

Tobi: That's perfect. That's perfect timing. Well, and it's been so fun to be on this journey with you in all sorts of ways and just to watch you grow. And to hear you talk about this and just to see your confidence and the ease with which you own this now is so incredible. Because there have been many, I mean wonderful moments where we've coached on things like imposter syndrome.

I remember in Design You, in the last couple of years because you've been in there for several years, in recent years you telling me that you had a launch and you made \$11,000 which blew your mind. And I mean that's a lot of money, which is great. I mean but still you were questioning and stressing. And I mean part of that I think is unavoidable because you do have to grow into it and learn some things. But what you're saying is so true about people needing help, needing the how, needing shortcuts.

And it's the very reason, we were just talking about a minute ago, that we just launched something called the Online Course Incubator and we're going to take 20 students for this first round, because I've been watching people do exactly what you described. And I'm like, "Why are people buying into the idea of a course but they don't ever get around to it or they might make something but they don't really sell it." Most people just don't ever make it. They're going to make it.

And everybody I talk to like, "I'm still going to do that. And that's still a good idea. And they just don't get around to it." So I was like, "Well, we know exactly how to do this. We've done many of them. I think we have five signature courses in Design You right now and we've done all kinds of workshops and things. I was like, "What if we just hold people's hands and

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help them create this. And then also give them the opportunity to potentially sell on our platforms and through our platforms. If they pitch their courses back to us and we accept them, we can partner in that way.”

Because what you're saying and I agree so much is the how of how to build it is the hard part. And then the building of the audience is such a hard thing too and getting access to people. And we've built an audience over the years, for over 25 years and however many Instagrams we've built on there. And so I was like, “What would happen if we just used those to help kind of fast track people?” Because one of my favorite things about courses is it's unlike interior designers or even kind of unlike photographers to a degree in that you can buy multiple courses.

You don't just have to buy one course. People need one interior designer so it's more competitive. But I've bought dozens of courses, multiple on the same topics and learn different things from different people. And so I think that's what's so cool about courses is it's in a lot of ways for the good courses, less competitive if you can get in front of your audience because people can buy more. It's kind of like books. You don't just buy one book because you can buy dozens of books.

So what are your thoughts about some of these things when you've thought about how to get in front of people, and growing your market, and partnering with people? There's all kinds of fun things that you're working on because I think there's so much opportunity for collaboration over competition in a lot of ways in the course space, does it feel like that to you as well?

Linda: Yes. And it took me a while to really, again, I was so focused on the technical part, and then the creating it part. And that's the other thing I think that designers have a problem is, is when is it done? I mean I think I had it done six months before it was done. I think I have a better slide for that one. I think, maybe I said that, I could say it better. And I would go over,

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and over, and over. Finally I just said, “That’s it, you’re done.” And I learned that from you, just be done.

But I feel like in my case in particular I did kind of hit the sweet spot because I’m in a great position to collaborate with other designers because that’s my market are designers but I’m not a threat to them. I’m not teaching kitchen design. I’m not teaching color. I’m teaching smartphone photography. And I don’t know a whole lot of other designers, in fact I haven’t met one yet who’s with a former professional photographer who mastered the smartphone. So for me it’s great because there’s a lot of opportunity for collaboration.

I’ve really just within the last maybe six months of trying to do this on my own I have a limited audience. It’s how do I get out there to the whole audience without spending thousands of dollars a month on Facebook ads which right now are not all that effective.

Tobi: Right. Not even working anymore, yeah.

Linda: Collaboration is the new word and I just when I went to High Point, I met several people that are interested in collaborating. It’s like, really, that will be great because I can help them promote what they want to sell. It’s not a photography class. It might be a kitchen class, or it might be I’m going to be collaborating with someone who designs Airbnbs. And I can teach people how to photograph their Airbnbs which is a totally different skillset than photographing for an interior for your portfolio, or for real estate. It’s very specific for what’s going to attract someone to rent your Airbnb.

So I’m very excited about collaboration. I think for me personally that’s the way to build my audience going forward is collaboration.

Tobi: Yeah, I agree. And I think that is just the name of the game right now in 2023 and beyond is that, the competitive thing is just the old paradigm. It’s the rat race. It’s the hustle. I think for me it’s the relationship building which is that collaboration piece that is so lifegiving and fun. And the reach

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expands in such a beautiful kind of organic way when you're just collaborating and partnering with other amazing people. So I love hearing that that's your experience too, it's so, so good.

I want to go back and talk about this idea of you hitting that little sweet spot because that's one of my favorite things to help people do in Design You. And it's so fun now to watch this, I mean you did all the work. I didn't do anything except come up with the concept and drop it and you picked it up and ran with it. But I love to help people create sort of what I would call their unique designer or creative DNA where they take all the parts and pieces of who they are and they put them together in a business.

Because so often I see people think, well, there's one type of residential designer, or there's one type of kitchen designer. I'm a designer. I'm not a lifestyle person, or a spokesperson, or influencer. And I'm like, "But you're kind of a whole lot of things." You influence your friends, and you have hobbies. And you have other skills and when you bring all that together, I've kind of known for myself and for other people, this is the beautiful, sweet spot where you do sort of eliminate competition.

Because just like you said, you took professional photography and interior design and you put them together. They kind of had a baby. And that's your course and the things you're doing now. And you make your own space in the marketplace really. So can you talk a little bit about what that was like? Because I know sometimes it's easy to resist things and think, nobody cares about photography, or what does that have to do with interior design.

Our brain wants to put all these obstacles in our way but it was when you really leaned into melding these things together that I think all the magic sort of came together and started to happen.

Linda: And I have to honestly, Tobi, give you a 100% credit for that because it never entered my mind that I could combine the two of them in any way because I wanted to, at the time when I left photography I had left

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it behind. I was burned out. I had spinal issues from lugging all that heavy stuff all those years. So I named my business, Linda Holt Interiors. And it was when we were together, I still remember this, sitting at your dining room table in a Mastermind VIP Day. And you said, "You need to change the name to Linda Holt Creative."

And I remember sheer panic, wait, I can't call myself that because I only saw myself, no, I'm no longer a photographer. That box is closed and tied up and now I'm in this new box. And you suggested combining them in some way. And I couldn't even imagine at that point how but I said, "Okay, I totally trust Tobi, she knows what she's doing. Look at who she is. Look where I am." So I went ahead and changed my name as soon as I got home thinking, oh my God, this is so embarrassing. People are going to say, "What the heck is she doing?"

But I just had faith that it would work out and that was the best decision because that opened me up to not just being pigeonholed as Linda Holt Interiors. So that's when the photography part sort of just organically started happening because during that same period I was trying to figure out the smartphone because I thought back then it was just a crappy version of a real camera. But the smartphones have gotten better, and better, and better.

And now the smartphone I have now is superior to the last digital camera I owned. Now I don't even own a digital camera at all. I mean the cameras are just so good and so smart now that they do a beautiful job. So as the cameras were getting better my mindset was evolving. Everything was kind of coming together to land where I was now. Because five years ago I don't think I could have really pictured myself doing what I'm doing now. I probably would still be struggling as an interior designer dealing with all the stress and the issues that everyone else is dealing with that I know right now.

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Tobi: Yeah. And the thing I love about just giving yourself options is you never know when one of those other things may come up again in the future in a different way. I was just telling you, in so many ways I had really gotten where I only do a very small number of interior design projects a year just for the people that I love the most that we've worked with for years. I'm just about to start a new construction project, well, we're in the process of it but we haven't broken ground yet, in Dallas for a long time client.

But other than my favorite, favorite people who I say are trained really well and know the drill and know the budget.

Linda: The Tobi way.

Tobi: Yeah. I'm like, "Oh, I don't know if I want to take anybody else on." But now my mom and I are starting a new, and you mentioned earlier Airbnb, a new short term rental company because some properties came up across the street from where she lives. And we've been kind of wanting to delve into this anyway. And so we're starting with these cottages. And so it's so fun because now I'm all excited again about design but in a completely different way because we are our own clients right now.

And then the end user, it's like a hospitality business. It's not even a design business. So it's so fun to see what is possible in the future if you just sort of stay curious and don't write things off necessarily and keep your options open. So it's going to be so fun to see what evolves for you. But can we talk about the other course that you're going to work on a little bit?

Linda: Sure, absolutely, yes.

Tobi: So you're getting ready, you have your iPhone, is it just iPhone?

Linda: No, it's smartphone.

Tobi: Because you do multiple, yeah.

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Linda: I learned actually, I had to learn android as well as iPhone. Because when I wrote the iPhone class people started saying, "Well, do one for android. Do one for android." So I wrote one for the Samsung phone and also the Google Pixel phone. So those are the three phones that I now.

Tobi: Look at you, so tech savvy now. So that course exists in those three formats or whatever. And then you're getting ready for the next course, which is what I love. Again, when we were creating our new online course incubator one of the things I was saying to my team is, "Once people learn this they don't have to keep learning the how." Then it just becomes about the content and the ideas which is so exciting. Because once you learn that process, which there's many different ways to do the process.

But once you get it down the way you like to do it, other than tweaking a thing here or there, it's not reinventing the wheel to do new courses.

Linda: Now it's a breeze. Now it's just putting it together in Canva, recording it. And my systems are all set up. I already have my platform. It's just rolling. So the next one I'm doing is how to use your smartphone to photograph your Airbnb.

Tobi: I need to be a student of this.

Linda: Yeah. So I'm already, I've actually got most of the outline done. Now it's working on getting photos because I actually have to find somebody with a good Airbnb that I can go in and photograph because I don't have an Airbnb. But I have several friends that have connections with people that own Airbnbs. And even if it involves a little bit of travel, which it may, I want to go and do it in an actual listing.

Tobi: Yeah. And a really pretty place, yeah, that's so fun. Yeah, I'm doing so much learning right now, speaking out, I'm taking a course on how to maximize the ROI. And really learning, listening to tons of podcasts and learning that the Airbnbs that are doing best right now which is such, it's so smart for what you're creating are the ones that are more like boutique

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hotels, that are well designed and create an experience for the user. People don't just need an ugly place to stay. They want to feel like they're in a beautiful hotel but also have all the things that go with it being a private home. So that's what you're going to capture, yeah.

Linda: Yeah. And it's so upleveled now. It's no longer about the view because there might be six other Airbnbs with the same view. Now it's all about the amenities and the photography is what is going to sell your bookings on your Airbnb. And boy, I've looked at, I've spent weeks looking at photography on Airbnbs, 99% of them are dismally bad because people don't know. They're taking their cellphone, they're point and shooting. The toilet seat's up, there's dishes. I mean some of them are so horrific.

And even the ones that look somewhat nice, they're too dark. You can't really see that well. Getting good photos can make the difference between renting it for top dollar or not.

Tobi: Well, yeah, because if you're trying to attract that luxury client who is used to having beautiful amenities, and design, and hotels, and they're willing to pay that amount of money. If they're going to pay 400, 500, and 700, whatever these high end prices are for spaces a night they want it to be beautiful. That's how I've been for years, even just looking at vacation rentals like Vrbo or anything, or just through, in Florida, through the companies that rent. I go and look and I'm like, "Is the interior design pretty?" Because I don't want to go spend a week in an ugly house.

Linda: Exactly. And they want upgrades. They want the Frette sheets. They want the high end espresso coffee machine with a coffee station. They want to know that the bathroom is spotlessly clean with plush beautiful soft towels. It's all of these upgrades and those are the ones that are doing really well and are booked out.

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Tobi: That's so amazing. So when you do your photography courses are they all still photos, or is there a video component of the work that you do with the iPhone?

Linda: I do both, but my course, it's prerecorded videos with slides showing everything I'm talking about.

Tobi: Yeah. But I mean when you teach people to do things are you teaching them with their phone to take just still photography or are you teaching them to take also video of those spaces?

Linda: Right now the one I have is just still but after my photography for your short term rental then it's going to be video. So those are the two that I have planned and that's going to be it for a while.

Tobi: Yeah, that's so good because the interactive, people want to see still shots. But I think so much now of the marketing comes into reels and TikToks. And if you don't know how to shoot the video in the same spaces that you're shooting the stills, you don't have all the marketing.

Linda: And I did talk to somebody who's really involved and they're experienced in renting Airbnbs and she said that, the sites such as Airbnb or Vrbo, they're really behind the times. They're only showing photos. There's not even an option to do a video. But I have a feeling that's going to change because you're right, the whole world is moving to video.

Tobi: Well, and a lot of people are just selling from their own sites now too and not even going, they're becoming their own booking agents. And they're not going through all of those other places that have had all sorts of issues and problems. And so yeah, I mean we know, it's going to just like the speed of light. It's going to keep changing and growing, which is so exciting. So when people are listening and they're like, "Okay, Linda's convinced me, Tobi's convinced me, I'm not waiting five more years for me to have a course."

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What advice would you give them to start moving into getting this done? Other than coming and grabbing one of our spots [crosstalk]?

Linda: I was going to say, that would be my first suggestion because I wish you had offered that five years ago. I would have been right there and not wasted five years. Think of all the money I lost and all the time I lost by waiting five years. But I would say you have to just do it. And I said this to myself, I'm just going to do it even if I never release it, I'm going to do it. And I just started blocking out, time blocking out certain days of the week where I was just going to work on course creation. I didn't know where it was going to lead me.

I didn't know how long it was going to be. I didn't know anything. I just started moving forward because I find that I must have sat and literally thought about it for two years. And that was so stressful and it wore me down thinking about it. So I just got so frustrated with myself. I said, "I'm just going to start it." So I started it with no pressure to release it, with no pressure to make it great, with no pressure at all. I just started walking forward and every week I did a little bit more on it, a little bit more.

And I thought, wow, this is actually pretty good and this is looking better. And then once it was done then I knew I wanted to start selling it but I didn't know what price. I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know how to market it. So that was another, there's these milestones all along the way but for just getting started, I think every friend I know that's a designer thinks they want to do a course. But they don't do it, they're just like me. There's something, I'm too busy with my clients. I'm too busy with my kids. I have no free time. I'll do it next year. I'll do it next year.

But really if you really think you want to do this then you just need to start it, just start it.

Tobi: Yeah. There's a couple of things there that always come to mind for me too because I think some people think they're going to make it. It's a

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one and done and they'll never do it again. And I think reminding people that it's an iterative process, you're going to create it and then you're going to find things that you want to change. And you may do another version in a year.

Linda: I've done three versions in 18 months, to completely new versions because things keep changing. The phones keep changing. Every time a phone comes out I have to update one module on the new phone and things change constantly. So yeah, I think if you make one course and it's static then you need to be always updating it. I mean I think that's part of it, always evolving.

Tobi: And one of the reasons not to be a perfectionist because once you put it out in the world and you get feedback from your customers, that's when you're going to learn, I would like to add this now or maybe I should have talked about this or they need more info here. And so we think we can design it in our brains the way it should be but it's really the user that helps us know if we're hitting the marks and if they need something else and if things should be tweaked, when you put it out in the world.

Linda: I ask people all the time. I have a little assessment at the end of my course. Was it the right length? Is there something that you wish that I had spoken about that I didn't? So I have a whole series of questions. And it's just all feedback for me so when I go to update it I will add that in. Somebody said, "I wish there was just a single module on tabletop." Okay, so I made a whole module on the updated one just on how to photograph tabletop because that's really hard to photograph tabletop, there's dishes, and plates.

Tobi: Totally. Very specific.

Linda: Exactly. So I did a whole module just on that. So I am learning too as I go.

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Tobi: Yeah, that's so, so good. Yeah, because if you think about it, there's so many different things people could be shooting in the world of design and entertaining, and food, and tables, and colors, and all the things that are happening, it's so interesting. There was one other question I was thinking about asking you about just getting started. I can't remember, it kind of left me. But as we're wrapping up, when you look back on what was in your way the most, what do you think it was? I mean it's always our minds, it's always our thoughts that are in the way of course.

Because we think it's the how, we think the technologies and stuff's the hard part but really you can go figure that out if you have to without that much trouble. Somebody knows the answer if you're willing to research, or hire, or talk to somebody. But it's our own thoughts that get in our way. So when you look back what would you say were those biggest obstacles of you moving forward?

Linda: Definitely what you just said, it was my own thoughts. But I just didn't think I could do it. I couldn't imagine myself putting myself out there. For me that was my big block. If I do this, I have to put myself out there. I have to promote it. I have to talk about it. I don't like doing any of that. I absolutely hate doing that. I was a photographer for a reason all those years. I'm behind the camera. I never like to be in front of the camera. So it was many, many baby steps, Tobi, of slowly tiptoeing myself out there. Then putting a foot out there, then putting a little more of myself out there.

But it's taken a lot of years and it hasn't been easy. I still fight with it every day. I did my first live mastermind two weeks ago and I'm taking a course right now. And my final for the course was to create a live mastermind leading into a three day flash sale launch. And I had sleepless nights for weeks, the fact that me alone, I had to set it up, promote it and give it all by myself. I was so scared. But once I did it I'm like, "I didn't die, that was actually okay. It worked out."

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Now I'm actually kind of looking forward to doing another one. I'm just going to do another one probably at the beginning of the year.

Tobi: Yeah. And by mastermind you mean the whole masterclass?

Linda: Masterclass, I said mastermind, I'm sorry.

Tobi: Yeah, they're all the same thing.

Linda: I did a masterclass on how to photograph your interiors using a smartphone and it was really well received. I had the best launch I had ever had to date. But you just kind of learn as you go, what's working, what's not working. But just creating the course, putting a tab on your website that says, classes, is not going to sell a single thing, not a single thing.

Tobi: No. Because we act like if we just put up a website that people are going to automatically come to it.

Linda: No. So maybe randomly once a year someone will bizarrely land on it and think, I could use this. But it's not going to happen. You have to be very strategic about how you market it. So that's what I'm working on now is the marketing part, getting my mindset in the right place that I can put myself out there. I can do a talk at Highpoint. I can do a live masterclass. I mean if you had told me, oh my God, 10 years ago, I would be doing this. It would be like you told me, you're going to live on another planet with aliens. And that's how foreign this would be to me back then but here I am.

Tobi: But it has been so fun to watch the baby steps because I have been along the ride with you. And sometimes I've been the one coaching you when you're terrified to even just go live on Instagram for five minutes or two minutes.

Linda: Petrified. I would have to run to the bathroom thinking I was going to throw up before I went live. That's where I started, nothing was scarier for me, that really was what I had to work on.

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Tobi: And you're literally oozing confidence now. I don't even know if you know how just calm, and settled, and confident. And your expertise is just coming through, which is so great. I remembered when I was thinking about it a minute ago and I think that you've done this so well is the niche piece of this too. We talked a little bit about that. But I think also one of the things that I love helping people do is figuring out what to start with. Because just having a 100 broad soup to nuts interior design classes or something like that is not really going to help you stand out or kind of pique people's attention.

You don't even just teach a whole class on digital photography. You taught this one very specific thing, how to shoot your interiors with your phone, the end. And that is so smart because it's so specific. And then once that takes off it's like now, you're like how to shoot Airbnbs. And you could do how to shoot literally anything, hotels, outdoor spaces. You could do whatever you wanted to from here. So when people are afraid because I think people get afraid that things are too narrow or that there's not a big enough audience for it.

Do you have any advice for them when they're thinking about leaning into something specific?

Linda: Well, you hear the saying, the riches are in the niches. And I heard that all the time but I remember thinking the same thing, well, how many designers are there that are going to want to buy something related to shooting with their smartphone. To me it seemed like such a small niche but it actually has been a great decision. And again, you were the one that kind of led me down that path. And I remember when I told a friend of mine, "I'm going to create a class on shooting with your iPhone."

She said, "Do you know how many classes there are on YouTube for free on shooting with your iPhone?" And I said, "Well, when I started out I have watched every single class but none of them addressed what I as a designer needed to know." I didn't know how to shoot window treatments,

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that wasn't on YouTube. I don't know how to shoot an interior. That really wasn't on YouTube other than the big digital cameras bringing in professional lights.

So I said, and I kind of joked but this is what I did, I said, "You know what? I'm going to create the class that I wish existed when I was trying to figure out how to shoot with my smartphone." So that was the course I created which is so niched down. It's just interior designers. It's just interior designers that want to do it themselves. The big firms they can easily spend, budget \$10,000, \$12,000 on a professional. But for every one of those there's a 100 small designers that don't have the budget, they're just starting out.

Or they have one room and it's not worth hiring a big professional. So I realize there actually are plenty of people that really I can target my course for. But you don't think that because you want to think you want to – you need to appeal to everybody. You just need to find your little lane of people and market to them.

Tobi: Yeah, your little, tiny corner of the world. And I think the last question I have for you and then I want you to tell everybody where to find you because they're going to be dying to sign up for your course. What do you think is possible when people are thinking about money? Because we talked about you having a launch that was five figures. And you've had even bigger launches since then. And now you're literally stopping everything else including interior design consults and designing to go into this full-time.

Is this and your experience so far really something that people could add either to their bottom line of their company or just make a living at all by itself?

Linda: I think so, absolutely, but it's not going to happen instantly and I guess that's one thing I really want to stress. Because I'm in a mastermind

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course with course creators. And for most of them it took about between four and five years before they really started generating the income that they wanted. In the beginning you're going to be happy to make two sales, five sales. And depending what you price your course at, the whole thing of I had my \$100,000 launch, my very first launch. That's just advertising. That's like lose 30 pounds in 30 days. It's not going to happen.

It's just false advertising, it takes time. But the wheels start turning and then they start turning faster, and faster, and faster. And a lot of people I think will maybe show some interest but they're not ready yet. But then they see you more and they might hear you again. And it's multiple touchpoints and that takes time to build up your audience. Your audience really does have to get to know, like and trust you, especially now when everyone is holding their money very close to them, worried about what's going to happen if we're having a recession.

So they want to really know that the money they spend is going to be worth it for them. And that takes time to nurture that and build that up, but absolutely, the people that I'm taking the course with, some of them are making close to a million dollars a year just selling their online classes which is inspiring.

Tobi: Brilliant, yeah. And our online program, Design You, that house all our classes. We don't sell it right now but we're going to do some new things in 2023. But we don't sell our classes individually. They're inside as you know, Design You. So that's kind of like selling a bundle of courses in essence and that became a million dollar business a couple of years ago. But it took us, it probably took four years for that to really get to that level of income. But there's so many beautiful things about it.

And you mentioned recession and this is not fearmongering at all because we have no idea if we're actually even in one now or going to be in one. But I love that you mentioned early on one of the ways you found me originally was in the 08 recession. I think that's when I started doing something

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innovative and teaching design camps which ultimately kind of long term became Design You and things in the online space. And then you mentioned that you created your thing in a pandemic. So these moments that feel like downtimes are often ripe with opportunity to create something new.

And I was just reading something the other day that said, I think Uber, Airbnb, and some other, Netflix maybe, some major companies that were created during recessions. And my whole online coaching business and all of that was created during a recession. So as people are thinking about the possibility of things changing again, or continuing to change, isn't that the perfect time for them to think about creating something like this?

Linda: I think so, absolutely.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that you did that during the pandemic. Well, this was so much fun. I could talk to you forever.

Linda: Thank you, this was great. I enjoyed it. I wasn't as nervous as I thought I was going to be, speaking to the Tobi Fairley.

Tobi: That's so funny. Well, don't put me on a pedestal. I'm just a normal human that's out here creating stuff like you but thank you for all of that and for being here and for all the lovely, lovely things that you gave me credit for. But I want to give you so much credit because there are many, many people, hundreds of people that have come through my programs who haven't taken the risk, and done the work, and gotten back up even when they were afraid, and pushed through, and done all the things that you have done.

So bravo my friend for doing the work because you created it, not me. And so where do people find you when they want to get your course now, they want to be on the lookout for the new stuff, the Airbnb stuff, where are all things Linda Holt?

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Linda: I am so easy to find. I am Linda Holt Creative everywhere, Facebook, Instagram, my website, it's all Linda Holt Creative, @lindaholtcreative on Instagram. Linda Holt Creative on Facebook. Lindaholtcreative.com is my website. And my classes are in my bio on Instagram, they're on my website. And they're through my email lists.

Tobi: Awesome. Well, you all, run over and if you don't already, follow Linda on Instagram. Get on her email list so you can get all the latest and greatest. And I'm sure in both Instagram and your email list you probably tell them about all the things you have coming up because I know you're going to be speaking next spring at High Point Market specifically about Airbnbs. You're going to be doing all kinds of things so they're going to want to follow along in that process too.

Linda: Yes, thank you, Tobi, yes.

Tobi: Amazing. Okay, well, thank you so much again for being here, I loved it. And I can't wait, we're going to get lots of feedback from this one.

Linda: Good, I hope so. I am passionate really about empowering designers to take control of their photography because I think too many think that the phone can't do it but let me tell you, it really, really can. And again, it's a mindset thing, so think of your camera, it is a \$1200, your phone is a \$1200 master camera, and you've got to look at it like that too.

Tobi: That's amazing.

Linda: Thank you, Tobi, this was so much fun.

Tobi: Yeah, so fun, see you soon, Linda.

Linda: Yeah, bye bye.

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Okay, you all, so was that not an amazing episode? I knew you needed to hear it again. Some of you didn't probably hear it the first time, but even if you did, what do they say? You have to hear something seven to ten times because you can really use it to make a decision. Well, at least twice for Linda because this stuff is amazing. She is incredible. She has really reinvented herself which is so inspiring. And she's really reaping the benefits of an online course.

And as the economy continues to change, as our industry continues to change, a lot of you are looking for ways to make money, additional revenue streams. Many of you have been in my recent three part series about additional revenue streams. And there are some of you listening right now that want help creating a course and you've either wanted to do it and didn't know where to start or you have the idea already but you just can't get around to making it happen, you don't make the time. And so we are running our Online Course Incubator again.

So to get all of those details, you go to tobifairley.com/courses. And you'll find out how to grab one of the 10 spots. I don't know how many are left at this point but we limit it to 10. There's a hard stop at 10 because that we have found is the perfect number for me to give everybody the attention they need and for us to really help you get your course created over the six month period. And then this time we're adding an additional option and you can upgrade to the Online Course Incubator and support package bundle.

So the incubator's \$5,000 but for 2500 more, for 7500, you can upgrade to the bundle if you want support with all of the tech, because we heard from several people last time that that's where they would get really stuck. And so my team, who is a wizard at all of that, has helped create this amazing support package with pre-recorded tech support videos, how to record and edit your videos, how to upload your videos to a platform, how to upload additional graphics.

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We're going to have bi-weekly office hours with the tech team and my operations manager for that four to six months, actually for months four through six. So we'll get you started on the course months one, two and three. And then those last three months you'll get the tech team because it's at that point that you'll be ready to start potentially recording and creating and editing videos.

And then we're also, because it can be challenging to show up to do all the things, work with your schedule and make sure you do the work and make sure you're not overly judging yourself of how you look or sound on video. So we're also throwing in with that bundle one-on-one mindset coaching from one of our certified life coaches or success coach to help you also finish your course strong.

So if you want the bundle, you get all the time with me, twice a month to learn how to create your course, to run all your ideas past me, for us to work together with these other nine amazing people that are going to build courses. You're going to love it. The reviews we got about this program were just off the charts. So you get all of that.

And if you upgrade to the support and tech bundle you get all of that hand holding to get your tech done, to get your course out in the world. Plus you get that life coach, that support success coach to help you in any other way get over mindset hurdles and struggles as you go show up in the world, you all, because you can do it. But you heard Linda and I talk about that, how hard it was to really see yourself on video and to really put yourself out in the world and so we have got you. We have got you with the support bundle, the tech and support bundle, add it on. You can add it on at checkout.

So go to tobifairley.com/courses with an s and read all the things about the Online Course Incubator, grab one of those spots, get this additional revenue stream working for you. If you didn't hear my episode just a week or two ago with Alisa Berry, you definitely want to. She was in our recent program. She has blown her course out of the water, already making more

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than \$20,000 on her course. She hit 10 or 15 right out of the gate, it is going strong. Her course is amazing about Christmas decorating.

And you can learn about Alisa and what her experience was like working with us, because like Linda, she is having great success. She is showing up and I want you to show up for yourself too.

Okay, so if you have any questions at all about this program, DM me on Instagram, my team and I will get all of those questions answered for you and we cannot wait to work with you in the Online Course Incubator really soon. And I'll be back next week with another great episode of *The Design You Podcast*. 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/revenuestreams.