



Tips for Turning Your 'Leaky Bucket' Content into a Client-Catching Magnet!

Message 1st Marketing

Is your interior design business's content catching you clients... or losing them like a leaky bucket?

Nearly every interior designer who comes to me for my copywriting services says the same things...

- "I can't come up with good content ideas. I mean, how many times can I talk about finding the perfect paint color or styling a bookshelf?!"
- "Such-And-So's design blog is amazing - and they have a gazillion followers. I need to be just like them."
- "Most marketing advice says to be everywhere on social media every day. I can't do that and run my design business!"
- "My reader and follower numbers are so low, not to mention that I'm not getting any new clients. Why the heck am I even doing this?!"

I get it - content creation is hard. It's time-consuming and competitive and it can feel like an impossible mountain to climb. But when I hear these frustrations, I know there's actually a bigger problem at play. If this is you, the problem could be that you're not approaching your content creation from a strategic marketing perspective. In effect, you're trying to fill your business coffers using a leaky bucket.

The 'Message 1st' fix

Even though being in a luxury lifestyle industry puts you up against a ton of design bloggers and Instagrammers, you have to remember that

you're ultimately creating content for the purpose of marketing your design business.

Let me say that again because it's completely crucial to making your content effective:

The main reason you're creating content and putting it out into the world is to attract real-live-actual-money-paying design clients.

It's only natural for you to want to achieve other things in your career like status as an industry expert and published projects. But if you approach your content creation with only those goals in mind, you're likely to miss the boat on getting in front of your prospects.

The good news is fixing the problem is completely doable. With what I call my 'Message 1st' approach to content creation, you get rid of those leaks in your marketing bucket by starting from a strategic foundation. Thinking through key items like what your current sales goals are, what your clients need from you the most, and your unique perspective on design sets you up for creating content that attracts qualified prospects.

Not just a quick fix

As with any key to success in business, Message 1st isn't a quick fix. There's a lot that goes into creating a solid marketing message and learning how to use it to make a real and lasting difference in your blog and social media's effectiveness.

But there are a few simple things you can start doing right now that will put you on the path toward fixing your leaky bucket.

1

Stop trying to keep up with the design blogging Joneses

Although there are certain industry-wide standards and expectations your content has to match up with, you've got to embrace the fact that you're not blogging for the same reasons the big name design bloggers are.

I'm talking about all of those achievements like getting hundreds of thousands of followers, being published in a national shelter magazine, or landing a guest post on a huge design blog.

While those things aren't bad, they do take a lot of time and effort - i.e. unpaid time and effort that takes away from you working with paying clients and marketing your services.

You've got to remember that you make money by selling design services. You blog to market those services. Full-time design bloggers with huge followings have to keep their numbers high and earn media attention because that's where their money comes from. The higher their numbers, the more their ad space or paid posts sell for.

And while some designers do get large followings, you don't need that to get in front of your potential paying clients. You just need to use your content to capture the attention of qualified clients who live in your area (for most designers far-flung jobs aren't the meat and potatoes of their income).

The same goes for getting published nationally. Sure, it's a great feather to have in your professional cap and it can lend value to your work, but it rarely helps local prospects find and hire you.

So breathe a sigh of relief! You can stop creating content to chase down followers and magazine editors while simultaneously trying to run your design biz. Just focus on creating amazing spaces for your clients and sharing content that supports your overall marketing message with a primarily local audience.

Who knows? You might just find better stats and media interest come as a by-product of your concentration on truly serving your clients and prospects!

2

Write your 'design manifesto' to find a unique point of view

When it comes to your marketing message, you know differentiators are vital...

But designers often struggle to find what's truly unique about them, which also means they struggle with creating unique content.

Sound familiar? Then try writing a 'design manifesto.'

All you need to do is list out your most deeply held beliefs about design - what makes for a well-designed space, what you'll never compromise on in a client project, what makes a house look and feel like home for your clients, etc.

Then take those statements and build content around them like this:

The statement, "I believe no room is complete without a piece of artwork the homeowner loves," can spark post topics such as '5 Unexpected Places to Find Meaningful Art' or 'How to Select the Right Size Art for Your Room.'

And if you put, "I always consider and plan a space's storage needs before beginning my designs," on your list, let that inspire content ideas like 'How to Design a Smart Bedroom Closet,' '3 Places in Your House You Never Knew You Needed Storage,' or 'Planning Your Home Office's Built-Ins: Open Shelving vs. Closed Cabinetry.'

By tapping into your totally unique point of view, you'll bring a fresh perspective to the design conversation online while also giving your prospects a taste of your true value.

3

Treat each piece of content like a 'pink spoon' for your services

Speaking of tastes, you know how a certain ice cream chain hands out those little pink tasting spoons so you can try a flavor before you order? They're not just being generous - they know that if you get a taste, you're more likely to buy that ice cream (and to be totally delighted with it so you'll come back again and again).

In the same way, your content can act like 'pink spoon' tasters to give your potential paying clients an idea of what you can do for them in their home's design, as well as what it would be like to work with you.

For example, say you're writing a post about wallcovering trends. Instead of just presenting popular materials, colors, and prints, make sure to also mention that a client recently told you the bold paper you selected for their foyer has made coming home happier for them.

Or, if your clients often mention they appreciate your efficiency, you can alleviate potential clients' fears about hiring a designer who'll make the project stressful, unnecessarily costly, and slow-moving. Use your posts to talk about how you work - how you culled dozens of tile options down to three the client would love; how you caught a contractor's measuring mistake and saved the client from having to move plumbing; how it's standard for you to finish your clients' spaces on time and on budget.

By giving your prospects insight into your personality, your core values, and the other intangibles that come along with hiring you, those bits of 'pink spoon' information go a long way toward earning their trust and ultimately, their business.

Crazy simple, right?! While you'll always have to do the work of creating content, the Message First approach ensures your efforts truly support your marketing goals. Give it a try and see how much easier catching clients with your content can be!



If you'd like to learn more about Deb's "Message First Marketing" online course for interior designers or her writing services, follow her blog at debmitchellwriting.com and Instagram @designwriterdeb.

Previously a freelance features writer for lifestyle and shelter publications, Deb now works exclusively with interior designers through one-on-one copywriting and ghost-blogging services and online courses in content creation and marketing. With nearly a decade of experience in and around the design industry, Deb has a deep understanding of designers' unique marketing needs. With her support, designers around the US and abroad now enjoy effectively marketing their businesses both online and off.