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Resourceful Designer Episode 322 Designing Success: Applying 'Selling the Invisible' to Your Graphic Design Business

In today's episode of the podcast, I want to discuss a book that has greatly influenced the way I've run my business, and that book is *Selling the Invisible, A Field Guide to Modern Marketing*, by Harry Beckwith. Now I know even though the title says, *Modern Marketing*, this book was written originally back in 1997. But the principles within apply no matter what era it is. And in fact, they do have a newer version than the one I have that probably has been expanded to cover some more modern times. I still read the 1997 version. Now I first discovered this book out of all places in *Mac Attic* magazine. Do you remember that magazine? I mean, back in the day, there was *Mac User*, *Mac Life*, and *Mac Attic*. And *Mac Attic* was my favorite out of all of the Mac magazines.

I don't know. It just had a different way of communicating, and I just loved it. And I was so sorry when they stopped publishing it. Anyways, there was an article in that magazine that talked about this new book that it would come out from Harry Beckwith, who was a master marketer, specifically on selling services as opposed to selling products. And I remember I was working at the print shop at the time, and I actually asked the manager if that we can get a copy of this book if I can order it because I'd like to use it. I was the Unofficial marketing manager for the print shop, I was kind of the person in charge of creating, advertising, and doing the marketing for the the the shop. So I asked if I can get this book, and I devoured it. And I still have the copy that they bought.

I got to keep it. And I tell you, I read it every few years because there's just so much to glean from it that talks about Clients, it talks about emotional. It talks about the mental part of it. It talks about the subconscious thinking that clients do whenever they're shopping for a service. And I think you should get this book and read it. Add it to your library of Must have books for your design business. Now if you wanna know the copy that I have or just find, them online, You could use the link resourcefuldesigner.com/sellingtheinvisible, and pick up your copy, whether it's an ebook or a physical copy, You won't regret it But today, I wanna kind of just give you a summary of what's in the book I'm not gonna go over everything because I think it's something you have to read for yourself But I will give you a summary of what you can find in this book. Now imagine you're in the business of making things look amazing.

Yeah. I know. Not that far a stretch. I mean, after all, you are in the design industry. Well, *Selling the Invisible* by Harry Beckwith is, let's call it, your secret sauce for people like us. It's all about marketing services, like I said, not just physical products. Because it's a lot easier to to market a physical Cool products, when you can show the client when they can touch and hold it and experience it before buying. But with a service, The client has to buy something or at least commit to something before seeing anything, and that's a lot more difficult to do.

And in this book, *Selling the Invisible, a Field Guide to Modern Marketing*, Beckwith focuses on strategies for promoting these intangible services. He explores the unique challenges of marketing services, and he emphasizes on the importance of understanding and meeting the often unspoken needs of clients. He also stresses the significance of building trust, of creating memorable experiences, and effectively communicating the value of your services. Now this book isn't specifically written for graphic designers. It encompasses all service industries. But I'm going to kind of just quickly break down the 6 key points in his book and how they do apply to us as designers. So the 1st key point is show, don't tell, or you can emphasize value over features. It's not enough to just list off your services.

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You've all seen this on websites before where you talk about Or or a designer list, we do logos. We do brochures. We do business cards. We do posters. We do and they list everything they can do. Well, that doesn't really help you sell anything. According to Beckwith, he says you gotta showcase the magic, not just talk about it. It doesn't help to say that you are a great logo designer if you can't show off a portfolio that shows you can create great logos.

Let your designs do the talking. Show potential clients how your services can solve their specific problems, and it even enhanced their brand. Now, I don't know many designers who don't do this part right, But we are in a visual space. That's what we do. We create visuals. So it only makes sense to showcase our work through visual design and not just lists of what we can do to help a client. Now key number 2 is to be a trusty sidekick. In other words, build trust and credibility.

I mean, trust is everything. I've talked about it many times before on this show, and it's especially important in the design space. Beckwith hammers on this for all service industries, but it's no different for you. It's actually more important for you. You see, your clients need to trust that you'll make their visions come to life. So whenever you're promoting or marketing yourself, that's what you have to market is that trust. But how do you market trust? Well, you showcase your testimonials. You should be reaching out to your clients and getting testimonials.

I make a point after every project To send out an email and ask for a testimonial. Not everybody gives them, but I have a folder where I put every testimonial I receive. And whenever I need something, I can add it to a website or whatever I'm doing. It's social proof. It lets People know that others trust you, so maybe I can trust you as well. So show those testimonials. Flaunt your experiences, and let people know that you're the real deal. Don't just say that you design logos or show logos, Talk about your logo design.

Talk about your poster design. Talk about your website design. Show people that you know what you're talking about. Now trust is paramount in any service oriented business, but especially so when it comes to graphic and web design. As Beckwith states, trust building can be applied to demonstrate your reliability, your expertise, and your commitment to delivering high quality designs. If you can show trust in your marketing, You've got a much better chance at converting clients. Now key number 3 is give them something to remember. Create a memorable experience.

Have you ever noticed how the best experiences in life stick with you? Think about my intro in this episode. Those things that you wish you can go back and savor, those experiences, they stick with you. Well, Beckwith says to try to create these memorable moments with your clients, And this is great advice for graphic designers. Make sure that the whole journey from brainstorming to final delivery, It's smooth, it's enjoyable, and it's something unforgettable for the clients. Make sure you give your clients exceptional customer service. Make sure you show them a great portfolio of outstanding work that they could admire before hiring you, And make sure that everything from start to finish goes smoothly, so that the client enjoys the experience and wants to work with you again. The better the experience, something that they can remember as being good will make somebody wanna come back to you even more. Now key factor number 4 is mind reader mode or understanding a client's needs.

Sometimes, and you've probably experienced this before, Clients don't even know what it is that they want. Sometimes, they have to wait to see it to know if that's it. Now, even though that can be frustrating, that's sometimes how this business of ours works. And Beckwith, in his book, goes into great lengths on tuning in to these unspoken needs, and how you can ask the right questions, dive deep, Figure out what your client's goals are, and then let your designs be the answer to

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their unspoken wishes. Now as a designer, you can do this through conducting client interviews, asking very probing questions. I have a great episode on 50 questions you can ask a client before every design project, which I'll link to in the show notes for this episode. And make sure that you are actively listening to what your client says. And this will ensure that your designs meet their specific goals and their expectations, or possibly even exceed those expectations.

Because a lot of times, the client doesn't actually know what they want. Now key point number 5 is be the design whisperer or develop effective communication. Now Beckwith is very big on communication in his book. And if you've listened to this podcast for a while, you know how important I find communication is as well. That's something that rings true for any graphic design business. Clear communication is key to success, and you do that by making sure your clients get what you're saying about concepts, about revisions, about timelines, and about every other step of the project. Don't leave room for guesswork here. You have to communicate everything very clearly so your client understands.

Effective communication with clients about every step of a project is essential for a successful outcome. And the 6th point that Beckwick covers in his book is play the long game. Focus on long term relationships. I've said it many times on this podcast, building relationships is the name of this game. And Beckwick knows it just like any service industry, and graphic design is no exception. It means delivering consistently awesome work. Keep the lines of communication open, and aim for repeat business and for referrals. That's how you grow a business.

You want your clients to come back, and you want your clients to tell others about you. That's how we prosper. Now I know I touched on these Six key points very quickly here. And I didn't wanna go too much in-depth, because I really want you to read the book. That's what the whole point of this episode was, is to read this book. And I'm not just talking about this. In fact, I believe this book so much That last year, the resourceful designer community, we had a retreat. We've done a retreat 2 years in a row now where we get together to meet each other in person.

Well, the 1st year, I wasn't able to make it, but I sent everybody at the retreat a copy of this book. That's how important I think it is. I want you to think of selling the invisible, a field guide to modern marketing, as kind of like your playbook. We're not just selling design services, but selling the experience, the trust, and the promise of killer value. By following the principles found in Beckwick's book, you can actually refine your marketing strategies, enhance client relationships, and ultimately, thrive in this competitive design industry. As I said, when I first read this book, it completely changed my thinking on how to market a service based business, and I've reread this many times over the years. Because ideas fade, Things start to drift, and every time I read it, it helps me get back on track on the message I wanna put forth and how I wanna present myself to my clients.