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Resourceful Designer Episode 335: Presenting Your Designs to Clients: You're Doing It Wrong.

Imagine that you just spent hours and hours working on the perfect design. And now you gather it up, and you're getting ready to present it to your client. This is the point where many designers make a mistake. You wanna know what I'm talking about? Well, let's get to it. Resourceful Designer episode 335, presenting to your design clients. You're doing it wrong.

Today, I want to talk to you about presenting to your clients and how many designers, possibly even you, are making a huge mistake when it comes to this part of the design process, a mistake that could be costing you lots of money and possibly impeding the growth of your design business. Now did that get your attention? Now let me start off by telling you about my college days. Now I took a graphic design program from my local college back in the late eighties, early nineties. Now during that time, it was at the emergence of computers being used in the design industry. In fact, it was a 3 year program that I was in, and we were not allowed to touch computers until our 3rd year.

The first 2 years of design, everything was done by hand, what is now considered the old fashioned way. But one of the things that we were taught was the importance of presenting our works to the client. Now in school, that meant presenting it to the teachers, But they taught us to do it the same way that any sort of designer or agency would present it to a client in the real world. And the way we used to present our designs back then was to mount them onto a board, either, we called it poster board or Bristol board or matte board. We would mount the design in the middle of a board, and then we would have a call it a fly paper on top of it, which is a tracing paper as we can also call it. It's kind of like a translation sheet. We would have that on top of it. And then we would have an opaque cover, which was usually just some sort of card stock.

And we would have a cover folded over it. And this was to protect the artwork that was underneath. And this is what we would do to show all our work to our teachers. Every single project we did had to be presented in this manner. And this was also the way that real designers in the real world were doing it. If you watch any older TV shows that talk about advertising or graphic design, you'll see them doing this. Mad Men is a perfect example. You see them All the time presenting to their clients in this manner, where they have a board and it has a cover on it, and they lift up the cover and ta da, there's the design.

Now, of course, with the advent of computers and technology, a lot of that presentation style has gone away. It's no longer required. Now you can easily just create a PDF and send it to a client. And that's Where my analogy of you're doing it wrong comes from. You see, I noticed that many designers, When they present something to their clients, they present the design. Now I know that sounds kind of Crazy? Well, of course, they're gonna present the design, Mark. What else would they present? But it's the way they present the design. Now this doesn't matter if you're in person Or if you're doing it via a conference call or even just sending it via email to the client.

Presentation matters, And I'll tell you why. Because of my experience at school and the way I had to present to my teachers, I learned over the years that that's how you did it. Now, of course, when I was working at the print shop, we didn't really follow through with that. It was very quick Turn around, get the jobs out, and we didn't really worry about presentation. But once I started my own business, I reverted back to, let's call it, my Cotes, and I started thinking more about the way I present my work. And this has just become so normal to me that I forget that this is not the way every designer does it. And I was thinking about that recently, and it got me thinking that the way designers are presenting their works

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today is actually hurting their business. Or maybe that's not the right way to say it.

Maybe it's not hurting their business, But it's not helping their business. Okay. Enough beating around the bush. Let me get right to it. Anytime I present something to a client, whether it's a logo design or a business card or a brochure or a poster or whatever. Now this doesn't really apply to websites. I know most of the time I talk about websites because I tend to do a lot of websites these days. This is more for actual graphic design, print design, and that sort of thing.

It does work if you're doing, like, digital ads and that sort of thing, but maybe not necessarily for websites. Although, I guess you can do it for a website. Anyways, I'm still delaying the big reveal, but here we go. Anytime I present something to a client, I don't just send them the design. For example, with Podcast Branding, my business that I do where I help podcasters with their visual branding, Anytime I design, say, a podcast artwork for somebody, I don't just send them the square piece of artwork. That artwork is placed onto an 11 inch by an 8 and a half inch tall sheet of paper. And On that paper, I have some other elements as well. So I have this, say, a letter size sheet of paper.

And I'm using the North American measurements here, so a a letter size sheet of paper is 8 and a half by 11, although I turn it in landscape mode in this case. And I have a template. And at the top left of my template is the name of the client and the name of the project. In the middle of the top of the template is the version, so I say version 1. The top right, I list the date that I'm submitting the the project to our showing the presentation. Then in the bottom left, I have my website. Depending on the the business, in the middle, I will put my phone number. And on the right, I have my business logo.

And in the middle of the sheet, I have the design. Now depending on what it is, I'll usually maybe Frame the design with a thin gray border just to give it some boundaries, especially if it's a white background, like, say, a business card. I'll put a thin gray border around to show what the size of the business card Des, and I'll present this to the client that way. So in the case of podcast artwork, if I give 1, 2, maybe 3 designs, they will all be on a sheet there together. In a business card, I might have a single business card in the middle of the sheet. And the business card will be the regular business card measurements, which Here in North America, it's 3 and a half inches wide by 2 inches tall for a standard business card. And that's how I present them. So the client, say in the case of a business card or for podcast artwork, would receive a PDF file that is 11 inches wide by 8 and a half inches tall that has their design in the middle.

Now you may be thinking, well, why is this So important. What's the big deal about doing this? Well, here is the big deal, and this has helped me so much over the years. How many times have you presented a design to a client, and the client turns around to you and says something to the effect of, You know, let me pass this by my wife. Or let me show this to a few friends. Or let me show this to my community, to my group, To, you know, whatever. How many other people? Let me put this to a vote somewhere. Now, yes, as a designer, you hate that. Design by committee is not the way to create good design.

But we can't stop our clients from sharing things. So why not take advantage of that? So in my case, whenever I submit 2 podcast artworks to somebody, And they say, well, let me show this to my community and see which one they prefer. Now chances are The client won't take the effort of extracting those 2 designs or cropping those 2 designs. They're just gonna share the 11 inch by 8 and a half inch sheet that I provided them with the 2 artworks in the middle, they're gonna share that to their community. So they are in essence advertising for my services. They are showing this design work that I did for them to dozens, Hundreds, maybe thousands of people, and that sheet has my logo, my contact information on it. And

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that is an amazing way to help spread the word about you. I have a corporate client that I do business cards for.

They have A ton of employees, and I do a lot of business Mark. They have turnaround in their staff, and anytime they get somebody new, they just say, Mark, here we need a new business card. Here's the person's name. Here's their email address. Here's their extension. And they have a photo on there, so here's their photo. Now I deal with the marketing manager at this corporation. He's my contact.

He's the only person I deal with, normally. But I always present my business cards, as I said, on a sheet with a business card in the middle, but it has all my information around it. Now that person, they're gonna look at the card itself, but they usually pass that card on to whoever the card the name on the card is for them to double check. Because somebody else may look at it and go, yeah. The name looks like it's spelled right. But nobody's gonna know for sure, except for the person whose name is actually on the card. So that person usually has to look at it and approve it and say it's okay. Sometimes they'll send it back to me or they'll send it back to the marketing guy, And he'll then tell me that the card is okay, and we'll proceed to have it printed.

But on numerous occasions, I've been contacted by the person I designed a business card for at this corporation. Asking, think, oh, I noticed that your contact information was on Bottom of this sheet, do you also do this other type of service? In which case, if I do, I say Des, and we connect and possibly work together. I have been contacted by people who have told me that, oh, I saw that you did some artwork Or you're doing some artwork for such and such a person. I saw you design podcast artwork for them. I'm looking to have a podcast or I'm looking to start a And I'm wondering if you can help me. And the reason they're reaching out to me is they saw the artwork that this person shared in their community. And when they shared that artwork, it was on a sheet that had my information at the bottom. And I have gotten so many clients over the years because of this.

And it's not just for that. You know, it's one thing to share something with a client. But the client, you know, they may know you. You may have been going back years dealing with them, But it's just a courtesy. If I have my phone number at the bottom of every sample that I provide them, They don't have to go looking for it. They don't have to look through their contacts. They don't have to call up my website. They just have to look at the sample that they're holding, and there is my email.

There is my phone number depending on the case, and they could contact me directly. In the case of a PDF, you could even make the email clickable, so they don't they don't even have to copy and paste it. They can just click it on the PDF. Same thing with your website. You can make it clickable, And they can click on it and go directly to your website. And this is what I'm saying. So many designers that I know of, if they design something, That's what they're showing the client. They design a business card.

They send the client a PDF of just the business card. They are missing out on this huge Opportunity. And I hope that you're you're understanding. And if you're already doing this, good for you. You're one of the few designers who actually does this. But now that you've heard me explain it, can't you see the possibilities? If you design a logo for a company and they wanna share it with, I don't know. A board of directors, or shareholders, or even just family and friends before approving it. They're showing not just The design that you did and not telling them if the people ask, they're actually presenting the design that has your information on it.

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So even if it's subconscious, Those people may just look and go, oh, Podcast Branding Design did this or Marksman Design, depending on which one of my design businesses I'm using at the time. They'll look at that, and it may not mean anything to them. But then later on, if they ever need a designer and they start looking at, You know, let's find a local designer here, say, for somebody around my area. And they come across, oh, Marksman Design. Oh, I know that name. They may not even remember where, but it was a touch point. It was a way for them to become aware of me if they weren't already. So even though I don't have the mat board that I put the design on And I don't have the tracing paper that goes on top, and I don't have the cover to protect it and all that.

The one element from those days in school was the designer information. Because every presentation On it, whether it was if it was on the cover or if it was on the back of the the mounting board, add my name and my contact information on it. And I'm following the same principle. And not just that, but just imagine the presentation. It looks so much more professional. When I send podcast artwork to somebody and they receive it in the nice template that I designed That has all my information. I even have a little swoosh of color at the bottom where my logo is, and I make it presentable. When they receive that, their response is, wow.

This looks so professional. I'm not just sending them. Here's a square JPEG of what your artwork will look like. No. Here is a sheet that shows you what your artwork looks like. I have a little drop shadow behind it to make it stand out, and they love it. And that's another reason to make them think. Gee.

You know, it's worth the investment I'm paying for Mark to do the work. Just look at what he's presenting. So what I do is, I use QuarkXPress, but you can do the same thing in InDesign or wherever. And I have a template that I just call up Anytime I do one of these, like, say, for podcast artwork, I have a template that I call up. And it has my website at the bottom, my email address. It has my logo. And as I said, at the top, I have on the left hand side, I have who the client is and the project. If it's a name of a podcast or whatever, I'll put the name of the podcast.

In the middle, I have version number because if they ask for revisions, then the next Cotes I send them will say version 2, version 3 at the top. And on the right, it's the date. So whatever day I send it to them, I make sure to update that the that date, and that gets sent to them. And this is so easy to do. And All it has to be is a little bit bigger than your design. So if you're designing a letterhead that is 8 and a half inches wide by 11 inches Tall, again, if you're not in North America, I don't remember what the exact dimensions are if you're in Europe where you you don't use the imperial system for that sort of thing. But all you do is you make the canvas a little bit larger so that you can have this information. And then put a little gray border or black border or whatever, just Small 1 point or 2 point border around it to highlight the edge of the paper.

And in some cases, say if I was designing a poster and I want the Artboard to be a little bit bigger than the poster, I would put that gray line there, but I might also include just a note saying that this gray line is the edge of the paper indicating that the poster would bleed off the edge of the paper. Or if there's no bleed on it, I put that line and I still indicate that it's the edge of the paper, just so there's no confusion. But whatever it is, the actual artwork is always at the actual size. So if I'm doing a poster, say, on a tabloid sheet, 11 inches by 17 inches, I may make this canvas Fifteen inches by 21, give it an extra 2 inch around the whole outside of the of the poster. And that way, when they look at it on their computer And they look at it at 100%, it'll be actual size. Now, yes, if they go to print it, it may cause some issues if they do that. And there

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has been times when a client has asked me if I could send it to them, like, just on its own so they can print it, and I'll gladly do that. But that's a secondary thing.

Because I want them to have all that in other information for when they show it around. I wanna ensure that everybody they show it to knows that I'm the one who designed it Anne knows how to contact me if they need something. And over the years, I've had many people contact me for that exact reason. So that's what I wanted to talk about today.