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Resourceful Designer Episode 336: Persistence Will Pay Off

Today, I wanna talk to you about something very important when it comes to running a design business, and that is the challenges involved with being successful, with being lucrative, with finding clients, and just staying afloat. I mean, the fact of the matter is finding clients as a freelance graphic designer can sometimes be very challenging, especially when you're just starting out, but not limited to that. I mean, I've been in business for 18 years. And last year, I went for several weeks without a single new project coming in.

And if this is you, if you're having trouble finding clients whether you're just getting off the ground or even if you have an established business, I want you to know that you're not alone. Every successful designer has faced similar obstacles at one point or another along their business journey. Yeah. Even me. Now, Des, I was extremely lucky to be handed a small portfolio of clients when I first started my design business. It allowed me to hit the ground running. But there have been times, in fact, long stretches where I've had no or very little work coming in. And there has been times where I've even wondered if my business was sustainable.

And I know how discouraging it can be to try to find clients because I've been there. And maybe that is where you are now. Now I made it through those tough times. I do have a successful business. 2 of them, in fact, if you wanna get technical. And because of that, I wanted to share some, let's call them words of encouragement with you to help you stay motivated and get through these humps whenever they should arise. So here it goes. Stay persistent.

Keep putting yourself out there. Success often comes to those who, well, persist. The more you promote your work and network with potential clients, the higher your chances of landing projects. So don't stop. No matter how discouraging you feel, stay persistent. Believe in your talent. You are a skilled graphic designer with unique abilities. If you weren't, you wouldn't be trying to do this business.

Well, those abilities that you have, there are clients out there looking for that exact thing. So believe in your talent, and the value that you can bring to those clients. By showing confidence in your own work and abilities, you will attract potential clients. Refine your portfolio. If you haven't already, take these slow times to polish your portfolio. Showcase your best work. And not just your best work, but the type of work you wanna do. If there's a certain thing you wanna do, those are the projects you should be showcasing.

And highlight your unique style and your strengths. A strong portfolio can and will attract clients even in a very competitive market. Explore new niches. Consider exploring different niches or industries that may need your graphic design services. Diversifying your client base can open up a whole world of opportunities for you. I saw such an opportunity in the podcast space, and I started my podcast branding business. And it has opened up a whole new area for me to showcase my skills. Now I still have my original design business and clients, but this, quote, unquote, side hustle that I started has become so lucrative that it's now my main source of income.

And how does that saying go? The riches are in the niches? You may wanna consider that. Expand your skills. Consider expanding your skill set by learning new tools, new software, things that are in demand. This may be photography. This may be video. It may be using artificial intelligence in some unique way. Expanding your skills can make you a more versatile designer, appealing to a wider range of clients. Remember that the design landscape is constantly evolving.

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Staying updated with industry trends and continuously improving your skills will keep you competitive and in demand. Never stop networking. Networking is crucial in our business. You need to attend industry events, especially in your niche, if you have 1. Join local and online communities for that same reason. You gotta remember that it's not who you know that'll make you succeed. It's who knows you. That's why you need to network.

The more people who know who you are, the better your chances at success. And don't forget to reach out to your existing contacts, your family, your friends, old colleagues. You wanna both build and strengthen relationships. You never know. Sometimes, your next opportunity can arise through some unexpected connection. Market yourself effectively. Invest time creating a strong personal brand. Develop a compelling story around your work, and use it in your marketing efforts.

Make sure your online presence reflects your skills and your professionalism. Clients will take notice. Speaking of clients, educate them on your value. Clearly communicate the value that you bring to clients, not just the skills and what you could provide them, but the value. If you can help them understand how your design skills can positively impact their business, then you're in. Educating clients on your expertise can make them more likely to hire you. Seek feedback. Don't hesitate to ask peers or potential clients for feedback.

We often fail to see in ourselves what is plainly visible to others. Constructive criticism can help you identify areas for improvement and refine your approach, whether that's design, business, networking, anything. Use feedback as an opportunity to improve and refine your skills. Continuous growth is essential in this competitive field that we've chosen. And stay positive. Remember that setbacks are a natural part of running a business. Stay positive and keep believing in your skills and your abilities. Your breakthrough could be right around the corner waiting for you.

And patience is key. I'm sure you've heard the saying, Rome wasn't built in a day. Well, neither is a thriving design business. Keep working hard and believe your efforts will pay off. The only way to fail is to give up, and I don't think you're a quitter. And finally, celebrate every small victory. Even the small wins like positive feedback from a client or a successful project completion deserve some sort of recognition. Celebrate these victories and let them motivate you and keep pushing you forward.

Remember, every successful designer who tries to go it alone to start their own design business has faced challenges. Just know that your dedication and your hard work will pay off in the long run. Set yourself some realistic goals and break them down into smaller, achievable tasks, and then just go for it. And be sure to celebrate your accomplishments along the way. And don't be too hard on yourself if you're having difficulty or if you're finding this hard. After all, success is a journey, not a destination. So keep honing your craft, stay persistent, and stay positive. You've got this.

Oh, and I almost forgot the most important thing. No matter how discouraging things may seem, you must always remember to stay creative.