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Resourceful Designer Episode 342: Redefining your hook to capture clients.

In this episode of the podcast, I wanna talk about something I've been seeing more and more of, or maybe it's just I've been noticing it more and more. And that is the hook that a lot of designers are using to capture clients, and how, at least in my opinion, a lot of them are falling short on their potential. But before I get to that, I would like to invite you to join the resourceful designer community. Now I know from experience and other designers have told me that running a graphic design business is not easy, especially when you're doing it by yourself from home. There are a lot of things that can get in your way or even just get in your head and make you wonder if you're doing things right or if there's a better way you could be doing things. And it doesn't matter if you're a graphic designer, a web designer, a UX designer, what type of designer.

It's really, really hard to do this alone. And that's why I formed the resourceful designer community, to bring together a group of like minded. And when I say like minded, I mean, designers who have a desire to build and grow their own design business, and they are willing to invest in order to do so. Now some of the people in the community have been running their business for years and just wanna grow, wanna learn a little bit here and there. Other people are just starting out. They're still laying the groundwork of their future. And even others have not even made it there yet. They're still working full time in some other job, dreaming of starting their own business, and they join the community so that when they do, they learn how to do it right.

But the best thing about the community is the camaraderie, the friendships that are born, the communication, the helping. It's a small community, Unlike Facebook groups or other forums and that where there's thousands of people, resourceful designer community is a small community. I will never have more than 50 people in the community. And because of that, we get to know each other. We get to know each other's businesses. We know how people think. And when you get advice from somebody you know, it's a lot easier to trust that advice and follow it. And because there's so few people, the other members tend to remember, and they can follow-up and see how you're doing.

So it's a great accountability group amongst many other things. And the members in the community have told me over and over how valuable this is as an investment in their business. Now whether you're just starting out, thinking of starting out, or you have an established business, if you wanna grow, then the resourceful designer community is the place for you. To find out more, visit resourcefuldesigner.com/community. Now as I said earlier, today, I wanna talk about your hook. What really got me thinking about this topic is over the last few weeks, I've seen a few websites belonging to graphic designers. And the hook and when I say hook, I mean the opening sentence, the introduction, the lead, or I don't know what you wanna call it, but that very first sentence on the website, it is so vital. And yet I see people that, again, this is maybe just my opinion, but people are getting it wrong.

And before I get to some examples here, I wanna share something that I just heard on a podcast recently. And that is the fact that Gen-Z, who is the younger generation, who's just getting into the business, they're they're just starting out, They're finally gonna be spending stuff on their own. Gen z, their number one search engine is no longer Google in their eyes. Yes. Google is still the number one search engine in the on the planet. But for Gen z, most of them turn to TikTok. They will search there before they will search something on Google. So you almost have to have the mindset.

If you want to attract these people, and these are the up and comers, these are the next generation of business people.

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These are the next generation of people that will have money that they will wanna spend, and they may wanna spend it with you. Well, these people, they have a different mindset than the generations that have come before. And their generation really thinks of the concept, what's in it for me? Now don't get me wrong. Every generation, every person at some point thinks, well, what's in it for me? But Des z seems to have embraced this. And I think TikTok has really brought this to the forefront. I mean, they created this algorithm that really nobody knows how this algorithm works. But TikTok is a master at giving you what you want.

What's in it for me? When you go on the platform, you start looking at stuff. Next thing you know, you're getting more of all the stuff you want to see, and they do it better than any other social media platform out there. And that's why Gen z is so drawn to it. But you need to take some of that experience, even if you don't use TikTok. I'm gonna share some some ideas with you. But even if you don't embrace TikTok yourself, you can take some of the lessons learned from it and apply it to your own marketing. Now, as I said, I saw a few websites recently. I have the the privilege of because I've been doing this podcast for so long, I often get designers that'll reach out to me and say, Mark, I you know, you may be busy, but if you have the time, can you just look at my website and let me know what you think? I get that often enough.

And when I have the time, I love going through, and I'll send them an honest critique of what I think and what they think, can be or what I think can be improved and what they can do to to make things better, which I guess is the same thing as improve. But you get the idea. And I love looking at that. Not only that, but I will often just go look at a graphic designer's website whenever I discover one. If I find out, oh, somebody's a graphic designer, I see something in a form, I'll look at their email address if it's there or if they list their website and their their signature or whatever. And I'll go look at the website just because I'm curious. I wanna see how it was built. I wanna see see the layout.

I wanna see the colors. I wanna see the the imagery they use, the text, the the message that they're portraying. But in the instances I wanna talk about today, these are ones that people had actually asked me to look at their websites. And once again, I'll say this is just my opinion. But in my opinion, the message that they were using as their hook was falling short. Now I have changed some of the wording here just to kind of protect the people that have sent whose websites I've seen. But here's an example of the type of hook or introduction that I've been seeing lately. Here's the first one.

We design websites for small businesses in Akron, Ohio. Contact us for a quote. That was it. Straight and to the point. Here's another one. Hi. I'm Luke, a web designer and I would love to design your next website. Great.

And here is the third one. We're a small graphic design studio servicing women entrepreneurs with logos, brandings, and other graphic needs. So those were the 3 intros or hooks on these websites. And you may be thinking nothing sounds wrong with them and and I'll agree with you. There's nothing really wrong with the message they're saying, except for if I was a visitor to any of those, I could ask the question, so what? And you don't want people to ask that. The first one, we design websites for small businesses in Akron, Ohio. Contact us for a quote. So what? You design Des websites for small businesses in Akron, Ohio.

I'm sure there's lots of people that do that. What makes you the person I should contact? Hi. I'm Luke, a web designer and I would love to design your next website. So what? There's lots of people that would love to design my next website. We're a small graphic design studio servicing women entrepreneurs with logos, branding, and other graphic needs. Well, good for you. Yes. Okay.

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I'm not a woman, so obviously I'm not their target market. But if I was, I would think, okay, good for you. But what's in it for me? You see the hook that you need to Des, and this is the hook that social media has really instilled in, as I said, Gen Z's, but all generation is you have to get that what's in it for me approach whenever you're trying to hook somebody. And that hook is really important because a lot of times, if you don't get them right off the bat, you're gonna lose them. People may only spend a couple of seconds on your website. If they're looking for a designer or a web designer, they may have lots of different options to choose. If they Googled it, then they have a whole list of people that can choose. You have to capture them right off the bat to make them go, oh, okay.

Maybe this is something I should pay attention to. So even though these messages were accurate and they were good messages, the hook in them wasn't good enough. Let me give you an example of rewriting them. So let's go back to this first one which read again, we design websites for small businesses in Akron, Ohio. Contact us for a quote. Well, when you think what's in it for me, it's like, okay. Well, I can get a Cotes, but okay. Really, there's there's nothing in it that says this is for me.

Now what if it was rewritten like this? Are you a small Akron, Ohio business looking to find new clients via your website? We can help you with that. Contact us to learn how. Well, now all of a sudden, if I'm in Akron, Ohio and I'm a small business, you know, why would I not be wanting to find new clients via my website? Now I can see what's in it for me. You know, this place is offering to help me find new clients with a website and I know I need a website, but other people are saying they can build me a website. You know, we would like to build you a website. This place is telling me that they can help me find new clients via a website. And then they have a contact us to learn how. Not get a quote, but to learn how.

So now I'm curious. It's not just that, oh, I wanna get a price from them. Now I'm curious. They wanna help me get new clients via my website? Okay. That's worth my time. There's something in it for me now. I wanna reach out to them and find out how are you gonna do this. And once you get that conversation going, then you can use all of your other skills in order to land that client.

But the idea is you want the client to contact you. And you may have a whole bunch of information on your website. But if you don't get them in that hook, there's a good chance that they never see that other information. Now imagine that line, that hook followed by a paragraph a little bit lower on the page. You know, you scroll down a little bit and, on the page, you say, as a small business in Akron, Ohio, we understand your unique challenges in attracting new clients. That's why we're here to help. Contact us to learn how we tailor our services to meet your specific needs. Wow.

All of a sudden, I'm thinking, these people, they they really wanna work with me. And not only that, I now wanna work with them. It's not just a, we design websites. That's what we Des. And hope they come. It's kind of like, you know, the field of dreams. Build it and they'll come. No.

You can't just start a business. Whether it's a graphic design business, a web design business, or any sort of business for that matter, and just hope people will come. Will some? Yes. For sure. Some people will just come because it's there. You will end up landing clients for no other reason than that. However, that's not a way to sustain your business. You need to have a reason for people to come to you and a reason for people to wanna stay with you.

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Let's look at the next example I had shared. Hi. I'm Luke, a web designer and I would love to design your next website. As I said before, yeah, so would so many other web designers. I'm sure everybody out there who's designing websites would love to design my next website. What's in it for me? Now this one could be changed so simply. Are you looking for someone to design your next website? I'm Luke, and I would love to help you. You see how subtle that difference is? And yet, now Cotes talking to the viewer.

Are you looking for someone to design your next website? I wouldn't be on your website if I wasn't. Like, what would be the point of me visiting your website if I wasn't looking for somebody to design the website? Now I know that. I know I'm going to your website because I'm looking for a web designer. But you're now acknowledging that. Are you looking for someone to design your next website? All of a sudden I go, yeah. Yes. As a matter of fact, I am. Well, I'm Luke and I would love to help you.

Wow. Thanks, Luke. Now Luke is talking to me. It's not, hi. I'm Luke, a web designer, and I would love to design your next website. It's like, okay. It's almost like, you know, they he's Luke started the conversation before I even arrived. Or or he saw the ending of the conversation before it even got started.

When the second option, are you looking for someone to design your next website? It's a question. And I can think in my head or even if I wanna answer out loud, Yes. Well, that's the whole reason I'm here. Why do you think I visited your website? It's because of that. Well, hi. I'm Luke. And I would love to help you. That subtle change can make the difference between somebody clicking to get a quote or to contact you or clicking away to the next person.

Because think about it. I don't know about you, but when I search something on Google and say for example, I search for web designers and maybe you wanna work with somebody local and you happen to be in I don't know. Let's use Akron, Ohio because that was the first example. You're in Akron, Ohio and you wanna work with a web designer. You're gonna Google search web designers in Akron, Ohio. And you're gonna get a list of people in Akron, Ohio that that design websites. Well, I don't know about you but I don't just click on 1, go take a look at it, and if I don't like it, I click back or whatever. What I'll do is I'll go down the list, maybe the first 5, 6, 7 of them, and I'll just on my Mac, I would hit command and I would click on them and I would just open each of them in a new tab.

So now I have 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Who knows how many tabs open for me to look through? And as I'm going through, I would look at the first one and go, no. Close this one. Look at this one. Maybe. Okay. Move to the next one. Nope.

Close it. That's the way I work. And if I work that way, I know many other people would work that way too. And somebody who does that doesn't take the time to scroll through, to look at everything. They're looking at first impressions. Does that hook capture them? And if somebody says, you know, hi. I'm Luke. I'm a web designer, and I would love to design your next website.

Yeah. Okay. So what? Close. But if the, the tab that all of a sudden you land on says, are you looking for someone to design your next website? They've hooked you. Yeah. That's why I'm doing this. Yes. You understand me.

And then, hi. I'm Luke, and I would love to help you. Luke, that's exactly what I want. I want somebody to help me. I need somebody to build the website. Now I feel a connection with Luke already, and I want to work with him. Now I may look

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at the other tabs, and maybe I won't hire Luke. But that hook, that opening sentence, that introduction has given him a chance to land me as a client.

Because I didn't just dismiss him right away. Because when I saw his hook, his message, I saw what's in it for me. You know, somebody to help me with a website. Now the third example, we're a small graphic design studio servicing women entrepreneurs with logos, branding, and other graphic needs. Again, if I'm looking for a graphic designer, I'm starting a brand new business and I'm I decide, oh, I want a logo or I don't know if I need a whole brand or a logo. I'm all confused about this stuff. Okay. You know, I land here and I say, okay.

These people, you know, they service women entrepreneurs and let's, for example, pretend I'm a woman entrepreneur. And I think, okay. Yeah. I can use a logo or branding or other stuff. So possibly. But what if their message read like this instead? As a woman running your own business, wouldn't it be great to team up with a woman led graphic design studio that understands your needs? Do you hear it when I say that? If I'm a female entrepreneur landing on that website, And the first thing I see is, are you a woman running your own business? It's like, yeah. Yeah, I am. Wouldn't it be great to team up with a woman led graphic design studio that understands your need? Oh, tell me about it.

Wouldn't it be great for that? Not to have to explain myself or or the difficulties or the challenges or and not not just I I don't mean all that stuff just about being a a woman entrepreneur, but just the challenges of running a business. But somebody else that I can relate to that says they're doing it. They understand because that's exactly what they're doing. Now, all of a sudden, the what's in it for me, I feel that connection. I wanna move forward. I wanna know more about these people. So is all this making sense to you? This hook is so important, especially in this age. I'm recording this in May of 2024.

And I I presume this message, whether you're listening to this now or you're listening to it years down the road, the message is gonna be the same. Anything that you put out there for marketing, you have to think from the other point of view, from the person seeing it. What's in it for me? Like, not me from you, but from them. What's in it for them? Because when I'm looking at something, that's what I think of. What's in it for me? And it's not to be selfish. It's you don't have a lot of time. These people visiting your website, they don't have a lot of time. They may not know everything, and they know they don't know everything.

They're confused. They're not exactly sure what to Des, and they want somebody they can trust. And if you put the right hook in there that shows that, hey. I understand you. I know why you're here. And you know what? I can help you. Then all of a sudden, it's like, wow. What's in it for me is somebody who understands where I'm coming from.

Somebody that knows what steps need to be taken. Somebody that can help me get from here to there. And that message, that hook, if you get it right, it could mean the difference between landing a client and the client clicking away that tab in order to find somebody else. And you can do this not just on your website, although in the examples I shared with you, it was websites because I was asked to review some websites. And even on websites I haven't reviewed, I've noticed this trend a lot lately. But you can use this same thing on anything that has to do with Mark. Whether it's a business card, a brochure, a flyer, a postcard, anything you're doing. Think about your message.

Think about the hook. What are you doing to track your clients? And think about it from their point of view because

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they're asking, what's in it for me? So I hope this made sense, and I hope you take a look at your stuff. Look at your website. What's the very first thing people see on your website? If it's something as generic as I design websites for small businesses, you need to change it right away. Because there are dozens, 100, thousands of people out there who have a very similar message. And you're just gonna be lost in the shuffle. But if you can reach through that computer screen, through that brochure, through that postcard, and really grab hold of the person viewing and pull them in, then you may have just won a client for life. And that's what I wanted to talk about today.

And once again before I leave, if you like this conversation or you wanna continue it or you wanna have other conversations about running and growing a design business, there are so many different topics being discussed within the resourceful designer community. As I've mentioned many times before, we're a tight knit group of designers whose purpose is to grow our business. We want to attract more clients. We want to charge more money. We want to do better design work. And we can do that through the help of other designers to inspire us, to instruct us, to critique us, to hold us accountable, and so much more. It's a very small investment to make in order to grow and succeed at your design business. To learn more or just to join, visit resourcefuldesigner.com/community today.

So thank you very much for tuning in. You've made it this far. I really do appreciate you. But it's time for me to sign off. And as I do at every sign off, I am Mark Des Cotes wishing you all the best with your design business. And as always, remind you to stay creative.