



Session #3

Finding Your Ideal

Clients



The Interior Design Business
Success Studio

Let's Find Your Clients

Business is everywhere, now just go out and GET IT!

Can you sell yourself? What are you afraid of?

Who would you want to work with if the tables were turned?

Who is your ideal client and where are they?

Where do they live?

What do they do?

How much do they make?

What do they want?

Who can you help? How can you help their business? What do you offer?

1.

2.

3.

What is your WWW presence?

You need a blog.

What will you share?

Where can you share it? (Facebook, Linked-in, Twitter)

Practice your "How do you work?" question.

SESSION 3: LET'S
FIND YOUR
CLIENTS

Business is
EVERYWHERE!

Now just go out and get it.

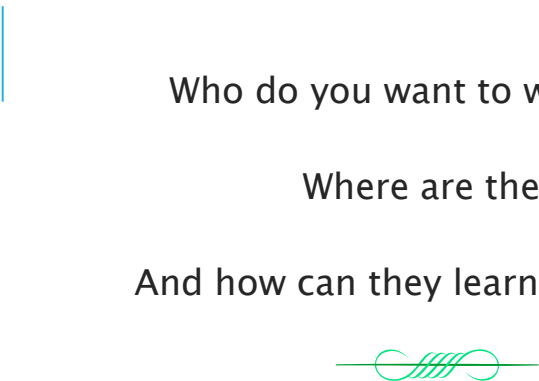
They need your help, so
help them!

This session is about finding your clients and as usual, it's pretty comprehensive and there is a lot of important information involved. Please make sure you are present and giving your full attention to this session. This session details HOW you are going to make money, which is the most important part of your business! What kind of designer would you be if you didn't have any clients?

I hope by now you have defined what type of design business you are working on building and that you have a clear picture in your mind so that you know where you are headed.

Some of the homework I've given you may have seemed basic, but it's all part of the bigger picture and will help you build a strong foundation for your business.


This biggest piece of advice I can give you about finding clients, is that business is EVERYWHERE! You just have to go out and get it. Design clients are just people who don't have a knack for design. You have a talent and there is a world of people out there that would kill for your advice, they just don't know how to get a hold of you! Once you get this in your mind and project the emotion that you can help, clients will flock to you.



Who do you want to work with,
Where are they,
And how can they learn about you?

SESSION 3: LET'S
FIND YOUR
CLIENTS

When you are looking for clients, you should already have in your mind, what type of people you want to work with and where they hang out. In this session, I will teach you how you can connect with them. If you can solve this puzzle, you will never have to work about making money in your business!



“OPTIMISM IS THE FAITH THAT LEADS TO ACHIEVEMENT. NOTHING CAN BE DONE WITHOUT HOPE AND CONFIDENCE.”
-HELEN KELLER

You need to sell your services:

- Stop feeling desperate and don't chase after them.
- Don't settle for the wrong clients.
- Don't sacrifice your family or your ethics, but do make some compromises.
- Offer a Lifestyle, not just new furniture.

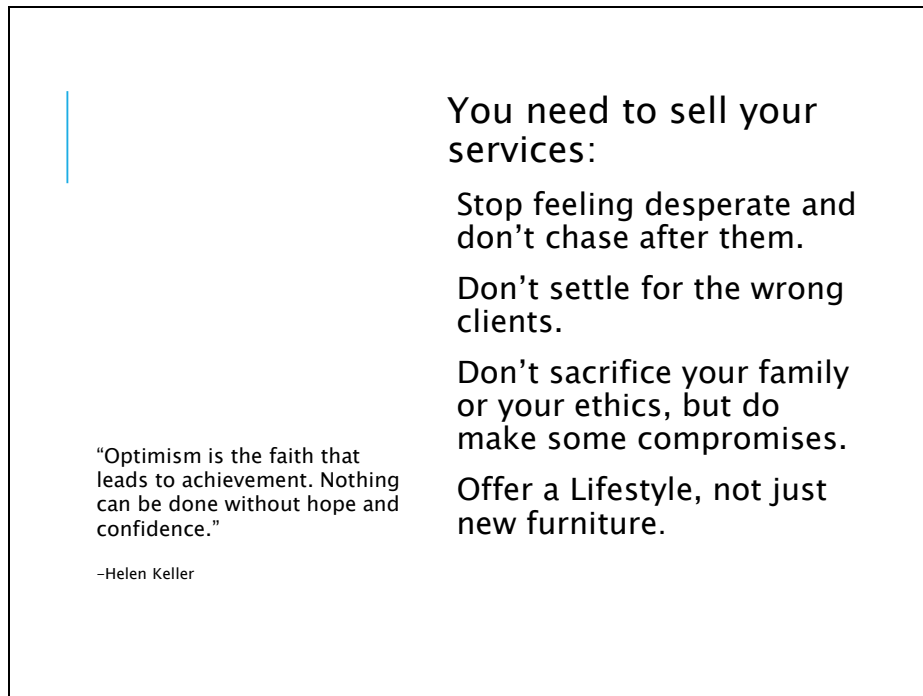
“But I don't like to sell. I'm not a salesperson.”

You must get rid of this mindset.

You have to sell your services before you can even get your foot in the door of client's homes. It's so important that you learn how to present yourself and your business or potential clients will never trust you or want to hire you.

Clients are potentially going to spend a lot of money with you and they are afraid. They are more afraid of you than you are of them!

I see a lot of new and experienced designers who just can't quite get their business off the ground and they start to project an air of desperation. People can sense this and it's a huge turn-off because they fear you are going to try and over-sell them things just so that you can make money. Be sure that you don't come across as too needy, aggressive or desperate.



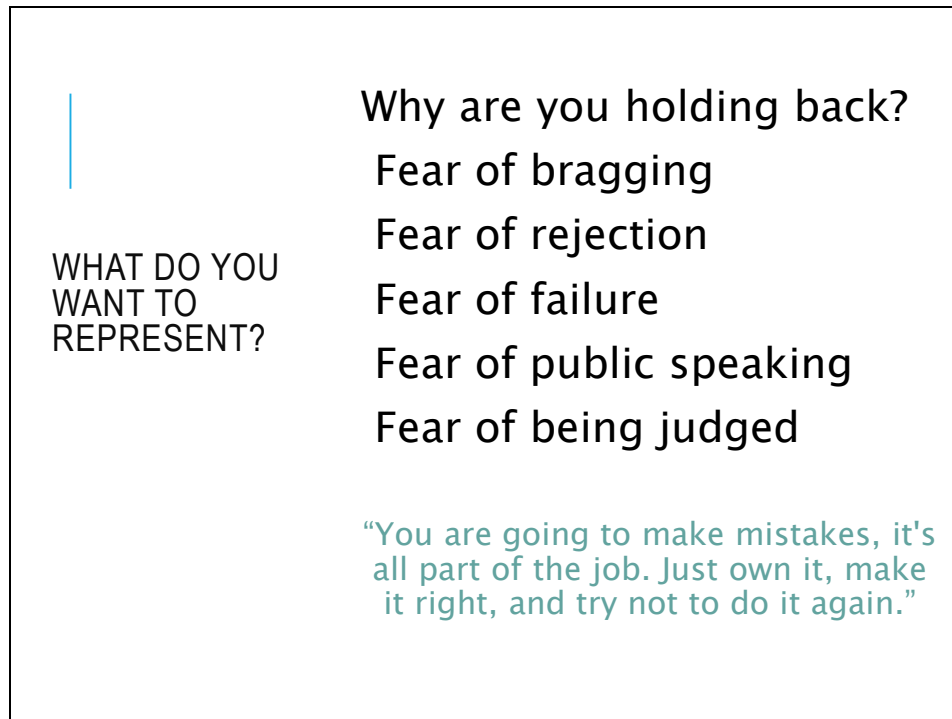
Along those lines, don't settle for the wrong types of clients. Be aware of people who don't have realistic expectations or budgets, or who you know won't pay you, or who won't mesh with your personality type. It will hurt your business in the long run. That's why it's so important to have it in your head who you want to work with and who you don't.

I say this from experience: Set boundaries and stick to them. Don't work around the clock to the detriment of your family or work with people you don't have a good feeling about. It's just a waste of your time.

You will, however, need to put your business first for a while. You may have to miss lunch with a friend or a pedicure while you are getting your business set up. You will have to make compromises.

Picture your ideal clients, what they are dreaming of, what they want, what they need. You are helping them create their environment, not just picking out new furniture for them.

All of this is part of changing your mindset so that you can sell yourself to your clients.



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO REPRESENT?

Why are you holding back?

- Fear of bragging
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of failure
- Fear of public speaking
- Fear of being judged

“You are going to make mistakes, it's all part of the job. Just own it, make it right, and try not to do it again.”

Why haven't you been successful? Usually it's because of fear.

This is something I recognized in myself when I was starting out as a designer. I could get clients and design beautiful spaces, but I was terrified of asking for money and for clients to sign contracts. It occurred to me that, as designers, we are creating a piece of art and we are asking someone to place a value on our creation and pay for it. What if they say, “This wasn’t worth my money.”

But fear holds us back from succeeding. Don’t let fear get in your way.

There are going to be times when something doesn’t fit or you order something wrong or it doesn’t turn out the way you described it to a client. Understand that you are going to make some mistakes, but that’s okay. Own up to it, apologize, solve the issue and learn from it. Once you accept that mistakes happen, you can let go of your fear.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO REPRESENT?

Become the person you would want to work with.

- Relaxed
- Attentive
- Confident

Be true to yourself.

- Don't put on a show
- No one likes a brag

There's a time for enthusiasm.

- You'll come off as desperate
- Scarcity is attractive

Before we can start talking about how you are going to find your ideal clients, we need make sure you clearly understand the emotional/personal side of selling.

Who would YOU want to work with if you were the client? How do you like sales people who work on commission to treat you? I like it when the sales person is relaxed and attentive, but not smothering. They give me space, but offer help and are confident. Become the person that you would want to work with.

If you are outgoing you will attract people who like that personality. Find clients that resonate with you, connect with you, and understand you. Don't be someone you're not.

Sell your services, but don't brag about your accomplishments. People don't care what you've done if you don't listen to them.

Scarcity is attractive. Don't offer up that you are a designer right away. Ask questions and show interest before offering your help.

Here's an example:

In a social gathering, while chit-chatting someone mentions that they just moved and are so overwhelmed with boxes and unpacking. Instead of immediately saying, "I'm a designer. I'd love to come help you with your new house!" I usually like to ask more questions like "Where's your new house?" or "What kind of house?" or make comments like "Oh living out of boxes is so frustrating! I know you'll get through it." Offer up little hints that you are in the design industry and they will pick up on it. I guarantee they will ask if you are a designer and will want your help. Then follow up with, "I'm pretty busy, but I think I could squeeze you in next Thursday."

Never open up an empty calendar in front of a client. Fake it if you have to by filling it in. We like people who are in demand.

You will scare clients away if you aren't aware of how you are presenting yourself and your business!

You will need to do your own brainstorming on where your ideal clients can be found, but here are some examples.

Where are you going to position yourself?

If you want to work with upper-class housewives and you live in an area where there are high-end houses (\$2M), think about where these women hang out.

- They are out having lunch in artistic areas with great shopping, wherever the 'in' spot is.
- Women in this category who don't have to work for a living are usually involved in women's groups, charity organizations, private school PTA's, etc.

WHERE DO THEY HANG- OUT?

Who is it you want to work with, and where do they hang-out?

- *Upper middle class families*
 - *Blogs and social media*
 - *Starbucks*
 - *Home Depot*
 - *Yoga or Pilates classes*
 - *PTA*
 - *Mommy and me groups*

Let's say you want to work with upper middle class families (income over \$150, 00 per year). Usually both parents work, but it's also common to have stay-at-home moms. They have discretionary income and there is a level of pressure to keep up with the Joneses. They live a tight community and want to impress their friends.

- These are people who try to 'DIY' so look at home improvement stores. I've actually found clients in the paint department at Home Depot!
- There are a lot of mommies and me groups if you are in the right area where there are younger families. The stay-at home moms are bored and looking for ways to occupy their kids.

WHERE DO THEY HANG- OUT?

Who is it you want to work with, and where do they hang-out?

- *Executive types*
 - *Starbucks*
 - *The Gym*
 - *Barnes and Noble*
 - *Restaurants and happy hours*

Let's say you are more comfortable with people who are hands-off, are too busy to be involved and just want you to do it for them. Then executive types might be your ideal clients.

- They gym is a great place, but make sure you are going either early in the morning or after 5:00 when working professionals will be there.
- Barnes and Noble on the weekend, especially Sunday afternoons.
- Strike up conversations at happy hour.

HOW DO THEY FIND YOU?

Talk to people and make a new friend.

Casually eavesdrop and give advice.

Spread the good news.

Facebook, Twitter, Linked-in

Get involved.

Join a group, volunteer your time, become an expert.

When you are at the places your ideal clients hang out, start observing, listening, and interacting with people. Especially listen for key words like:

- I just moved
- furniture
- new house
- relocated
- paint

You've got to challenge yourself to get out and start talking to people! Give advice when needed, but keep it casual. It doesn't take much to strike up conversations but it does take confidence and courage to start talking to people.

Facebook is a great way to get new clients. When writing a post, the best strategy is to ask for help because people love to help and give advice to others.

Example: "Hey everyone I'd love your help in spreading the word about my new design business! Could you please pass the word along if you know anyone that's in the market for a designer?"

Get out and meet new people by getting involved in various groups.

HOW DO
THEY FIND
YOU?

Make a partner in your
business.

Who else works with your
target clients?

Organizers, Realtors, Contractors,
Builders, furniture store owners.

There was a turning point in my income when I made an industry partner.

The best strategy is to think about whom else works with your target clients and partner up with them.

An example:

I partnered up with a small furniture store owner. I created a color/texture/pattern board that she displayed in her store and she referred me to people who came in needing design services. In exchange, I sold pieces from her store to the clients she referred to me and I got a percentage of the sales. Clients were pre-qualified because they came into the store knowing the prices of the furniture. It was a win-win situation for both of us and I got a constant stream of clients from the partnership.

HOW DO
THEY FIND
YOU?

Give and you shall
receive!

What can you offer them to
help build their business?

Approach with kid gloves
and be empathetic.

Focus on the benefits, not
the burden.

These are the lessons learned from designers who tried to emulate the same success I had:

You have to come from a position of giving. You are not just looking for clients, you are offering help. What can you offer them to build their business?

For example, you could approach a professional painter and offer to help build his business by sharing resources and networking together. You could offer one free hour of color palette selection services to his clients in exchange for him referring your services to any clients he sees who need decorating services. His clients may also be so impressed with you that they hire you for your design services as well. You refer his services and he refers yours. It's a mutually beneficial partnership.

Business owners have a sense of pride, so you need to be careful that you don't come in and step on their toes. Offer help, don't insult. Come in with an idea or a presentation and don't make them track you down.

HOW DO
THEY FIND
YOU?

Share your expertise.
What do you have to say?
Trends, tips, updates, and of course PICTURES!

Projects that you've worked on...even your own
Inspiration photos and professional pics

You don't have to take credit for the design,
but you can show off your critique skills.

Let them see you know your stuff.

You need a website, a blog and Facebook and/or Twitter to share your expertise with people.

Don't get overwhelmed or stuck, though. Start with a simple blog.

What if I don't have a lot of experience and don't have a lot of projects to show?

Start off with high-quality inspiration photos (stock photos, magazine photos) and let people see that you know something about design.

WHAT DO
YOU WANT
TO
REPRESENT?

You need to sell your services:

Business card – basics

Website – clear and easy to navigate

Brochure – use at charity events

Postcard – leave with homeowners

Color texture pattern board – to display with Realtors, stores, workrooms, and events

Your marketing tools need to have some color and should be cohesive.

Postcards are a great tool because it's something people can have in their hands and can see a representation of your business.

A marketing tip to try: Make bags for new homeowners with chocolates or packets of seeds that includes one of your postcards and business info. Leave it on their doorstep once they move in.

Make display boards for businesses that have the same clients as you but that don't want the headache of the design work (furniture stores, drapery workrooms, upholstery workrooms, etc.).

WHAT DO YOU
WANT TO
REPRESENT?

Have Visual Proof!

Rendering

Your projects

Magazine pics

Imagination

Examples

Floor plans

Vignettes

Mood Boards

Beautiful Spaces

Can you define beauty?

Can you represent your vision?



Examples of how you can incorporate visual proof of your talents.

Make sure your marketing tools have lots of pictures. A picture is worth a thousand words!

SHARE
YOUR
TALENT
WITH THE
WORLD.



Royal blue is the new “IT” color for the Spring! By starting with a background of calming neutrals, the pop of rich indigo adds richness without overwhelming the room.

This is an example of a royalty free picture I found from Photostock. You could put it on Facebook, Twitter, or a blog with the caption above.

It shows you know what you are talking about, you are up on the current trends, you’re a problem solver, and that you know how to start with the basics and add punches of color. It doesn’t matter that you didn’t design the space. People just want to know that you know what you are talking about and that you have good taste.

HOMEWORK

- **Specifically** list where you will find your ideal clients and set goals.
- Who can you partner with (developers, mortgage companies, builders, painters, organizers, cabinet makers, realtors, furniture stores) and make appointments with these people. Take action and make it happen!
- What are you going to blog about?
- What action steps are you going to take this week?