

THE DESIGNERS' ADVISOR

POLLY WILLIAMS, FOUNDER OF **CAMBERYARD**, DIVES INTO THE RABBIT HOLE THAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA AND LOOKS TO DEMYSTIFY THE USE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS FOR THE BETTERMENT OF YOUR BUSINESS



Social media is a hot topic amongst interior designers.

It is an extremely useful tool; excellent for networking, reaching out to industry experts, magazine editors, suppliers, as well as potential clients past, present and future. It's also great for being part of the 'conversation' and expanding creative marketing opportunities by teaming up with like-minded designers and suppliers to organise workshops, events or simply to talk about each other's services and products. If you are baffled by social media, it may be due (as I see most often with my clients) to a lack of content that is original to the designer. Most projects, for example, are only shot once by a client, so material to post might be limited. Furthermore, I often see a lack of considered thought about 'brand building' content, an essential ingredient when looking at your social media strategy. Photography is a great way to build your brand online. Don't just photograph your projects, think of the added elements that make you, you. Build up your own library of images to post. Think seasonally, think locally, think globally.

Another reason I see designers not using social media as effectively as they might is down to not fully understanding their USP and target market. Without this knowledge, it makes it difficult to know how to pitch yourself and start that conversation, putting yourself and your brand out there in a genuine, compelling way. A deep understanding of your USP and who you're trying to appeal to comes from developing an emotional connection to your design studio and understanding what makes you special. Going through a dedicated process of finding and defining your niche can not only be key to a thriving social media presence, it can be hugely important to your overall business success.

As I always say, take time to stop, breathe and contemplate. Ask yourself: what is social media going to do for me? You may have created an interactive, vibrant page and have accrued plenty of keen, like-minded followers, but depending on your goals, this could be irrelevant if it is not converting into business. If you want to really reach your target market – i.e. the people who will hire you or who you can collaborate with! – you may need to consolidate your USP and your call to

action to impel your followers to convert interest to action or open up new opportunities. Strategy is important. Not only can it help you refine and focus your message, without it, you might find yourself posting randomly. Spontaneous posts can be refreshing, that 'unfiltered' voice helping to liven up your page, especially if you're responding to an event that happened that day. Much of the time, however, if you haven't given much consideration to your post, it can detract from your overall message, at worst, harming your brand and alienating the very market you are trying to reach.

The overall message is that your website reflects your brand, and social media can be your voice for your brand – use it wisely to connect, grow and engage. Despite its many positives, remember that social media is only a small part of your business development, so take care to allocate your time on it accordingly. It is important to focus on getting out there and spreading your message in person as well.

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