

FINDING YOUR INNER VOICE IN BUSINESS

BY POLLY WILLIAMS

Founder, Camberyard

*Polly, inspired by her love of helping designers and brands launch or expand their business, founded the multi award-winning **Camberyard** in 2015. She is now one of the UK's leading business development consultants for interiors, brands and designers. Polly now offers expert business advice, mentoring and networking to interior design professionals. Taking a holistic, step-by-step approach, Polly has created a strategic framework that puts personal and professional growth alongside business development. In addition to helping clients launch, grow or streamline their business, providing advice on PR, social media, USP, marketing and business strategy, web design, and trade and retail shows, she specialises in bringing designers together. Inspired by a belief that collaboration is better than competition, she formed the Camberyard Collective, a select group of like-minded designers, brands and creative professionals. The Collective regularly meets, often in Camberyard workshops and round tables, to share ideas, barter services and support each other. Here Polly discusses the creatives behind the creatives and how to add value to your design business.*

As the Designers' Advisor, I spend my days talking to designers and brands about the practicalities of running their business. On a deeper level, however, I spend a lot of time working with them to develop their inner voice. I always start by asking them to step back and allow themselves to really understand if they wish to work with a potential client; to get some space to see how best to manage the project so it fits with their ethos and business foundations.

What does this mean in reality? It means really listening to what your client is saying before engaging professionally with them. If developed correctly, you can turn the ability to listen – both to your client and to yourself – into a superpower. Using this power effectively when you first meet your clients, whether in-person or remotely, will allow you to



Above: Victorian Terrace Renovation designed by Camberyard Collective member Hubner Studio
Photography by Edmund Dabney

POLLY WILLIAMS

understand their psychology from the beginning. This understanding is, as every designer knows, essential to developing a relationship based on mutual respect, trust and communication. If a good connection is made at the start, it helps to facilitate a smooth working relationship and a better overall experience throughout the project. Thus, my mantra: stop, breathe and contemplate if the client is the right fit for your studio. Part of the listening and reflection before accepting a project involves examining your role as the designer. In other words, to consider your responsibility to lay boundaries before, during and after pitching; to put forward the right fee proposal; and to establish a clear implementation plan. I also recommend not only listening to what the potential client is telling you but to what they are not saying. For instance, it may be the first time the client has worked with an interior designer, so is unaware of the time and budget implications of working collaboratively on a project. Factor in other suppliers and potential delays and you may have a perfect storm for a breakdown in the client/designer relationship. Taking time to really consider all of these questions and potential issues pays dividends later. So, what makes a 'perfect' client/designer relationship? In my experience, having mentored hundreds of designers over the last five years, alongside a shared creative vision it is a combination of four areas: psychology, profitability, pitching and professionalism. How you interlink, understand and collaborate with these areas will determine whether you have a full, open and easy dialogue where transparency and communication flow freely.

Focusing on the psychological level – though it encompasses pitching, profitability and professionalism – what can you do to really understand who you should have as your clients? What kind of projects should you be working on? Start by incorporating a chemistry meeting into your pitching process. Anyone in the Camberyard Collective will know exactly what I am talking about as it is one of my favourite topics! Chemistry meetings are an essential pillar of Camberyard's connection and collaboration ethos. Invariably, it will take more than one meeting if a project or client needs a bit more investigation or nurturing, especially smaller projects, which, if not structured correctly at the start, can morph and end up taking just as much time as a larger one. Taking time to see if you align with a client will stand you in good stead when deciding whether to work with each other. In addition, look to fully understand your client's needs – their practical needs from a design viewpoint but also their emotional needs – where do they place value in their home, where do they place value in integrity and in the transparency of a working relationship? In fact, much of this work can be done

when you develop your own brand and USP – fully understanding and articulating your own philosophy can help to attract like-minded clients. Working with my designers on giving themselves permission to say no to a client or yes while putting down boundaries, is a long but rewarding process. This way of approaching clients with your inner voice at the forefront has to be developed carefully, but when you feel aligned with the client and the project feels true to your core offering, it's empowering, and the project will not only be more enjoyable but more fulfilling. To summarise – be brave, be fearless and take the chance if it comes along to listen to your inner voice and work towards the abundance of space this will create for the projects and clients you aspired to when you first set up your studio. So stop, breathe and contemplate: how can I work an understanding of my inner voice into my business development strategy? When you do engage with that inner voice, it might just be one of the best business decisions you ever made.

www.camberyard.com
IG: @camberyard



Find out more by visiting
www.scabetti.co.uk
www.pinterest.co.uk/scabettistudio

Contact the studio on
+44 (0) 1538 371471
or email idy@scabetti.co.uk

Image shows a Shool286 in a private residence in The Netherlands.



lighting
&
sculpture
by

scabetti