



POLLY WILLIAMS



## Business Development

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 business development and what it takes to be a brand.

I am in the privileged position of seeing clients every day who are launching, growing or streamlining their interiors business. The most successful clients balance design projects with brand and business development, they love the business side and embrace it as much as the creative projects they work on. What exactly is this 'business' side? It is the building blocks of a business essential to sustained growth. At its core, this includes the practical elements of setting up a studio, for example: contracts, insurance, CDM regulations, GDPR and financial planning. On a more tactical level, it is creating marketing/PR, networking and social media



*Polly Williams is the Founder of Camberyard*





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plans, as well as conducting regular strategic reviews. A clear action plan in these areas enables you to grow, learn and really focus on developing your brand and business for long-term success.

Vision, talent and hard work are essential to achieving that success, but a clear plan must come first. There are many areas I ask my new designers to look at, but first I ask them to stop and think about what kind of design business they want to create and why. Is this a lifestyle or a full-time business? It may sound obvious, but there are many recent graduate designers who have not fully thought this through and the answer determines how you build your studio and brand. The beauty of running your own studio is you get to choose how you want to live, what your work life balance will be, and what projects work for you.

Once you can answer the question, it's time to tackle the

other elements that make a successful design studio.

In an ever-competitive industry, with an easily accessible online market, it can be difficult to stand out in the crowd. One of the essential starting questions is thus: do you know your USP and have you really thought about your target market? In a busy and thriving marketplace, what will make your dream client find you, engage with you and, most importantly, hire you? Building a brand is the key here. What are the added extras you can give your clients so that they buy in to your services?

Start with your USP, what makes you different? It doesn't have to be a service that is unique, just a tagline that gives you placement and can facilitate conversations.

Then look at your target market: who are they, what do they spend money on, where do they live? How will you find and gain access to them? Maybe you will organise a colour workshop by collaborating with a nearby

kitchen company or maybe, if your target market is home gyms, for instance, you will start to connect with gym equipment suppliers and see what opportunities you can open up. You need to get creative and inventive to reach them.

### **Building a brand**

Building a brand is one of my favourite elements when working with a client. For me, it is like planting seeds and watching them grow. Make sure your website reflects your company foundations. Don't be the designer with an out-of-date blog and links that don't lead anywhere. If your blog has fallen by the wayside, look at ways to change the format whilst still retaining the information. Networking, building a brand and telling your story can be done in person or via social media. Take the time to put in place an action plan with realistic goals.

Social media is, of course, a



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fantastic tool that you can use to grow your online presence and start to engage with journalists, potential clients and brands with whom you would like to collaborate. It's an immediate way to create a voice and get your brand out there, tapping into a wide network. It's not about quantity on social media, it is about quality and interaction. The internet has revolutionised the market. Not only are designers able to reach out directly and show their projects, the reverse is true. Computer savvy clients are able to source furnishings and, more importantly, see the price it is retailing at. This online-based interiors market creates the option of engaging purely online with a client. The client sends a brief and a studio can then provide a full interior design service remotely, sharing ideas, giving advice and buying the products online, without ever meeting the client.

Keep in mind, however that, at its core, brand building is about integrity and testimonials. Make sure you invest time with your clients when you first meet them (whether that is on or offline), so they buy into the values of your brand. You may find that together, it is a smoother, more authentic journey. By the same token, it's important to remember to collaborate, not compete with other designers. Join a group like the Camberyard Collective where designers are sharing knowledge and working together to grow both an on and offline presence. To have a successful brand as well as run a successful studio that offers a unique, personal service, dedicate time each week to brand building - in other words: business development. At Camberyard we use a 360-degree holistic framework that focuses on the business areas that, when

put together, add up to a whole. For brand development, the fractions of action include social media, website/SEO, PR & marketing, creative marketing and networking.

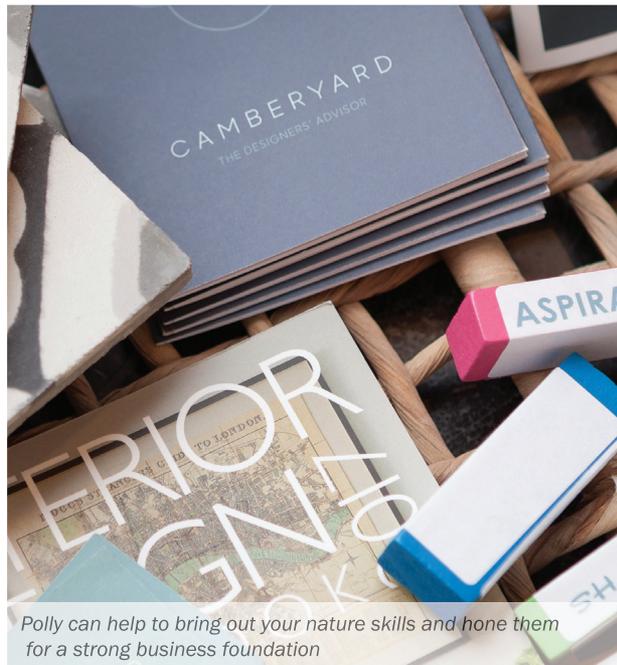
If you are taking all of these elements into account, you should be ensuring a strong base. However, one of the most important questions to ask yourself after you have clearly defined your brand and USP, is whether the studio is financially viable. If not, there is work to be done. Financial planning should be one of your fractions of action, for monetary success cannot be underestimated. It enables you to make choices. For instance: what projects you accept/decline; whether you can afford to hire staff; what premises you want for your studio; and how you plan for future growth. It doesn't necessarily mean outsourcing certain areas, though it can include that, it means really

working on the creative marketing element to barter and collaborate with like-minded designers and brands.

### 2019

Looking ahead, I think 2019 will be a year of development as designers move towards collaboration and sharing skills. The freelance market is growing rapidly, with designers handpicking their team of freelancers to work on specific projects as and when. Freelance CAD technicians and interior designers are now hugely sought after. At Camberyard, we spend a lot of our time linking designers with our directory of freelancers. And how to stay relevant in this rapidly developing market? Knowledge is power, keep learning! Find out what you don't know, keep an eye on the market and stay inspired.

[www.camberyard.com](http://www.camberyard.com)



*Polly can help to bring out your nature skills and hone them for a strong business foundation*

