

Ep #40: 4 Birthday Reflections for a New Era



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With Your Host

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Hey designer, you're listening to episode 40. As I head into my birthday weekend I'm sharing some key business lessons from the past year and how you can take these reflections and use them for yourself.

Welcome to *The Interior Design Business CEO*, the only show for designers who are ready to confidently run and grow their businesses without the stress and anxiety. If you're ready to develop a bigger vision for your interior design business, free up your time, and streamline your days for productivity and profit, you're in the right place. I'm Desi Creswell, an award-winning interior designer and certified life and business coach. I help interior designers just like you stop feeling overwhelmed so they can build profitable businesses they love to run. Are you ready to confidently lead your business, clients, and projects? Let's go.

Hello designer. Welcome back to the podcast if you've been listening for a while, or maybe even since the beginning. And if you're new here, welcome, welcome. I'm so glad to be here and to be having this conversation with you.

As I shared in the intro, if you're listening to this live it will be just a few days before my birthday, these are birthday reflections. And I'll say I'm not a huge . I need to celebrate my birthday for the whole month, or it's not a big deal or something I've ever really gotten into, but I do think it is a great time to celebrate and reflect and glean lessons from another year that has passed.

My birthday weekend will be pretty quiet this year but last year I was actually in Iceland over my birthday and that was pretty amazing. I have this picture that one of my kids took and I'm on the streets of Reykjavik having a coffee. And it's pretty incredible to look at me, that woman in the picture, and see this incredible life that I've built for myself. One where I can travel and help others in a way that's so fulfilling to me. And also be there for my family in the way that I really want to show up.

I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but if you could go back to that little version of you as a child and say, "Hey, look what I've created." I mean, if I could go back and show the little girl version of myself where I am today, about to turn 39, I don't think she'd really be able to wrap her head around what I'm living right now. And I want you to consider that for yourself. Just pause, whether

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that's looking back far in the past or even just five years ago, a year ago, six months ago. Take a minute to just be amazed by you and how far you have come.

Yes, I'm sure there are things that you have on your goal list that you want to accomplish in the future, and at the same time you can still look back and be so proud of how far you've come. This has really been an interesting year for me, lots of recalibration, I call it, in both my life and business. It's also been a year of lots of personal growth and turning inwards and getting even more clear on the purpose of my business, both for myself and my clients.

If you've been following along with me, you know that evaluation and using what I learn from those evaluations to inform my next steps is really a regular part of my self-coaching and my business development. And I thought it would be fun today to bring you along for the ride to hear some of the lessons from this past year that have really impacted me and also could be relevant and applied to your business.

I will say, none of these lessons are brand spanking new. Lessons often aren't, right? We learn a lesson, it seems to be resolved, we think we've got it and then it shows up again or in some different way, totally normal. These are lessons I've encountered and learned before, but the depth to which I see and understand the lesson this year is at a new level.

There are four lessons I want to share with you today. The first lesson is I make the rules, so I can break them. My mind loves to create rules for myself. The first time I started seeing this was when I realized I had unconsciously made a rule for myself that I couldn't read during the day, especially fiction books. I mean, okay, where did I pick that up or why did I come up with that? But it was something that became very apparent. I mean it felt like I was getting away with something or I shouldn't be doing it.

And I thought that it wasn't productive to read during the day or that it was frivolous. It was just something that my mind had formulated without my awareness or consent. And I know this is a silly example, but I find over and over again that my mind likes to create rules, both within my personal life and in

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my business about how things have to be done or what my business should look like.

And sometimes these are rules that just materialize it seems, without my consent. Or I'll hear something from a business coach or colleague and then adopt it as a capital T truth without even realizing it, without questioning that input and saying, is this something that I want to adopt? In general, I think learning about best practices and having guidelines are really helpful. And you also want to always be able to re-decide and first, of course, be conscious of the decisions that have been made without you even realizing it.

One of the things I was thinking about was that I had been in a business mastermind that had a very prescriptive method that it taught. And I learned a ton from this particular coach. And at the same time after being in the program for a while, and then stepping away, I also realized I started to adopt the one size fits all approach that was being taught.

What's so fascinating to me about this is that one of my own values, a very strong value of mine as a coach and a business owner, is that there is no one right way. There's the way that's right for you, and we all get to decide what that is. And that's how I coach my clients. I believe that there are many ways for my clients to be successful. And I forgot for a while to apply that to myself.

As I was planning out the last Out Of Overwhelm launch and thinking about what I wanted to do and what I needed to get done within the time parameters I had laid out, I saw some more rules really emerging clearly around what I should be doing or how it had to be done. And even after the launch started I was having ideas that went kind of "against" the rules. And I was able to see the rules and decided to break some of them because it was just what I wanted to do.

Breaking rules and writing my own rules for my business is feeling especially relevant as I've been thinking about how I want to serve designers before and after Out Of Overwhelm. And my brain is offering up lots of things that are just what are done, those are more rules that I'm interpreting from the outside world, and looking at not just why it might be done that way. But also, is that a way I'm interested in doing things?

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What I really want you to take from this lesson is that we all have a set of rules that we're operating under. And it's a great idea to look at what those rules are so that you bring them to the surface and decide if they're rules you want to be working with. Anytime I hear a should in my own brain or for a client or for you as you're reflecting on this lesson, it should be a tip-off – Should, did you hear that? It should be a tip-off.

I want you to use the word should as a tip-off that there is a self-imposed rule or a rule you've picked up somewhere that you might want to explore. And some of these rules you might like. You might think, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I want to keep that rule. And sometimes you want to break them and you get to decide.

The rules really are optional. And I'm not talking about breaking the law here in case anyone's thinking that. But the way that we run our business, we really do get to decide that. So that's lesson one, I can break the rules, especially when I create them, anytime I want.

The second lesson that I want to share is that everyone benefits when I invest in myself, but they also don't need to. For many years now I have invested in myself and my business very regularly. And this past year I shifted the ratio more from business investments to more investments in myself as a person. It's been much more of a year to tune into myself and work through some of the sticky stuff.

And honestly, that is what I love so much about offering Out Of Overwhelm to designers, is because you get to work on your business and the byproduct is you're working on yourself. Whether it's been me working with a coach, taking time for movement or therapy, or creating space for my own self-coaching, of course there's time and money devoted to all of these things for my own benefit.

I do recognize that there is privilege in this and being able to say that I am going to devote the time and resources to my own wellbeing. And I want to honor that. It's an essential part of me taking care of myself. And I know that my family, my clients and community also gain from these investments. And the lesson here is I also know that it's okay for me to do things just because I want to.

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I recently completed master coach training through the Life Coach School, something I am very proud of. There's only about 100 master coaches in the entire world and the school trains thousands of coaches. So this truly, truly is an honor. And this really was a very significant financial and time investment for me to take on.

When I made the decision to invest in this, it really was first and foremost for me. I knew my coaching skills would be further up-leveled, my clients would benefit, I was going to come up with some great new concepts and tools and continue to be an influence in this industry. And at the same time, that also wasn't the driving force behind my decision.

I knew that the experience and training would change who I am in a profound way because I will always be my own client and know intimately the type of transformation that happens through consistent coaching. I wanted that for myself.

Often I hear that self-care or investing in yourself is important so that you can care for others. And this is absolutely true, I believe that. And sometimes we need to remind ourselves of that to help us navigate some of the guilt or resistance that we have to prioritizing ourselves. What I want you to know though, is you also have permission to care for yourself simply because you want to. Because you want to enjoy a version of you that is well supported, healthy and happy.

The third lesson I want to share, and I think this one is so important for you all to hear, is that I am not my business, meaning you are not your business. You know how I say your brain goes everywhere with you? This is just another example. Yes, your brain creates value out in the world, which you exchange for money, but you are not the business.

And this separation that I have gained between me as a person and me as the business was not something that was even remotely in my awareness when I was practicing as an interior designer, and I so wish that it was. I mean, really, it's no wonder any feedback or mistake or reselection request felt like the end of the world, because it felt so personal.

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The lesson here is that just because your name is on the website or on the door, that does not mean your value or worth is wrapped up in what you accomplish, how your clients perceive you, or what that latest feather is in your cap. For me, I will always do my best in my business. I'll make the best decisions I can. I'll act according to my values the best that I can. I'm going to set goals and I'm going to go after them.

And at the same time, I don't have to hold pride hostage based on what's happening with the business. I can separate the value that I put out in the world and the value that I produce with my business as something that comes from me, but it is not me. I, of course, love what I've built and the ways that I have contributed to the design community. And the business does not need to be my source of identity or validation. It feels amazing when you accomplish things, when you are featured in the press, and it also isn't the only thing. It can be both here.

And the last lesson that I want to share is that nothing is set in stone, and it's not supposed to be. This is really related to the first lesson on rules. When I think about my business, I do think of it as a giant experiment. And I always encourage my clients to do the same because ultimately, there's no certainty in any outcome. It's always a hypothesis that I'm going to do this, I think it's going to go well or this outcome is going to happen. And then we get data and we see if the hypothesis is correct or not. And then we adjust course if needed.

Now, I know that it's an experiment, and at the same time what I noticed last year is that I was actually kind of judging myself for what I deemed to be too many experiments or trying too many things or changing too many things in the last year. Even saying that out loud seems a little silly to me. I mean, of course, there were shifts in my business. I continue to grow, I continue to innovate, I continue to see what my clients need and I meet them where they are to support them.

I'm going to change and evolve and my business is going to mature. I'm going to make new decisions based on new information. This is absolutely the way it's meant to be. I really want all of you to hear this because I often see changes in your business or things that you want to put in place. There's a desire to be the

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final and end way right off the bat, and that pressure on those actions to create a very specific outcome is preventing you from moving forward with anything.

And so what I want you to hear really, is that evolution, iteration, it isn't a sign that anything has gone wrong the first time. I want you to think of changes and things not being set in stone is a sign of things getting even better.

Those are the four lessons I want to share with you today. I'll recap them here. The first one being I make the rules, so I can break them. The second one is everyone benefits when I invest in myself, but they also don't need to. The third one is I am not my business. And the fourth is, nothing is set in stone. It's not supposed to be.

I encourage you to take some time this week to reflect on the lessons that I have shared here and how they might apply to you and what lessons have emerged for you recently. And then the really important part, what do you want to do with those lessons? That's what I have for you today. I'll be back next Wednesday, as always. It'll be after my birthday with a brand new episode. Until then, I'm wishing you a beautiful week.

I'm going to make the bold assumption that you enjoyed today's topic. Let's make sure you never miss an episode; follow the show now wherever you listen to your podcasts. If you haven't already, I would really appreciate it if you'd make the time to leave me a rating and review. This is how I know what you're loving so I can share more of it.

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