

## Ep #72: Why You Should Set Low Expectations



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Desi Creswell**

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## Ep #72: Why You Should Set Low Expectations

Hey designer, you're listening to episode 72. This is the one where I'm going to share why you should actually set low expectations for yourself and your interior design business. I know all of you Type A designers might be thinking, what is she telling me? But stay with me and hear me out.

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. So glad to be here with you, as always. We've had some new listeners and thank you to all of you who have been leaving reviews and ratings for the show. I really, really do appreciate it.

As we dive into this episode I'll give you a quick reminder, I do still have the giveaway going on where if you leave me a rating and review and then submit a quick form where you can give me your contact information, you'll be entered to win a one-on-one private coaching session with me. And you have a great chance of winning, so definitely do that if you haven't already submitted a review.

And if you have submitted a review, thank you, thank you, thank you. This really helps the podcast be found by other designers. And it's really exciting for me to know that you all are sharing it and helping other designers get this information out into the world.

If you're listening to this in real time, we are at the beginning of March. I can hardly believe it. I don't know about you, but the first two months of the year have just flown by. I can't believe we are coming into spring season, almost. And later this month, we're going to go on spring break as a family and we're going to go to Spain. So that is really exciting. That is only a couple of weeks away as this is being aired.

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And let's just make that a reminder for all of you who might be taking time off, whether that's going on a trip or reducing your hours because you're going to have kids at home because they're off of school. Now is the time to start planning for this so you're not scrambling at the last minute. If you need support taking time off from your business, I've got a whole episode on that. So you can check out episode 20 if you want my best tips and tricks, because I love going on vacation and traveling with my family.

Today, what I want to talk to you about is something that I have had come up in several of my coaching sessions lately. And it's really about having high expectations for ourselves and how these high expectations for yourself and your business can actually hinder your growth, progress, and success.

I think for a lot of the designers that I work with, we are so used to being high achievers, being that Type A perfectionistic thinker. And when I offer up that maybe the high expectations are not working so well for us, it's a bit of a mind bend. But it's been coming up a lot and I thought it'd be a great topic to bring to the podcast.

And specifically when we've been coaching on these expectations, it's coming up a lot around my designer clients wanting to be out marketing more, either in person or on social media. But as we go through this episode, you can really bring to mind something where it's feeling like there's a lot of pressure, high expectation of you to perform or act in a certain way. And think about that specific example for you.

Think about how maybe you have the desire to do something, but the expectations you have of yourself or what you do or what you want to create or at what level you want to create is actually preventing you from doing the thing. And right now, you might not have awareness of how those expectations are preventing you from doing the thing, and that's okay because we're going to talk about that and get some awareness so you can see where you're at and then use what I'm going to share today to move forward.

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But think about some of those things where there's just so much pressure, there's clenching, there's tightness, and you're not doing the thing that you consistently say you want to do.

As we get more into this idea of setting low expectations and why it can be really helpful, let's of course first define what is an expectation. Today, we're going to be talking about expectations that we put on ourselves, not expectations that we put on others, let me just clarify that. And an expectation is simply a belief that you will or should achieve something or do something. That's how we're going to define it today and that's it. Pretty simple.

The important part though, is that it's something you've made up or decided. Sometimes you've decided this expectation consciously, but often these expectations are unconscious or they've been grabbed from somewhere that you're not quite sure, but you've just adopted the expectation. Your expectations might be related to certain tasks you complete in your interior design business.

For example, you might have the expectation that you send out a newsletter once per month, or that you post on Instagram two times per week. It also could be a real vague expectation, like I should consistently market my business, without really defining with a number what that expectation is.

You also might have expectations around who you are as the owner and human running the interior design business. Often this is where I see more of the unconscious expectations that we place on ourselves and it often leads to a lot of stress and pressure and overwhelm and anxiety. Expectations like I should never make a mistake or I have to be available to my clients all of the time.

As I share those examples of expectations around what you do or how you don't do certain things or who you are as the business owner, again, I want you to be thinking about what's that specific example that you might be noticing coming up for you right now. And as we move into talking about why you should maybe consider lowering that expectation, I'm going to be talking a lot about setting expectations too high.

So the too high, if you could see me, is in quotation marks. Too high could be a variety of things, it's going to be different for everyone and you're going to need

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to check in with how an expectation feels in your body. This is one of the ways that you're going to know if that expectation is getting in your way of getting you what you actually want.

When you think about the expectation that you have for yourself, if it feels like maybe it's a little edgy but doable, or something even that when you think about the expectation it feels really expansive or like a slam dunk, you're probably okay. It's probably serving you. But if you think about the expectation you've set for yourself and you have that clenching feeling or a tightening or a contraction, maybe it feels like a sinking feeling in your chest or your gut. It's a good sign that the expectation is "too high."

As with anything I share, you can take it or leave it. And if setting the bar really high for yourself is working for you, meaning you're taking the action you want to take and getting the results you want to have, then absolutely go for it and continue to have those high expectations.

What I'm talking about today is if you continue to create unhelpful pressure from too high expectations, and it's preventing you from taking action and achieving what you want to achieve in your interior design business, it's really time to reevaluate and possibly set some lower expectations.

In this episode, the context really is about setting low expectations in relation to your business goals and priorities, but this absolutely applies to any personal goals you have as well, because this really is an internal shift you're making. And as the saying goes, wherever you go, there you are. How you do one thing is how you do everything.

And that's why what I love about the work that I do with my clients is that we are shifting from the inside out. And the external definitely shifts, but the internal is shifting and that's helping the external shift. And it's why the work that you do on your business has such a profound ripple effect into the way that you show up in your life, the enjoyment that you have outside of work, the relationships that you nurture and foster and it's just so incredible. So I will say that if you work on this in your business, you are definitely going to see the impact of setting those low expectations for yourself personally.

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The reason why too high expectations are an issue is that when they're too high, it's a lot harder to get started. And if you don't get started, nothing changes. There are a few ways I often see high expectations playing out for my clients and how it creates issues for them in how they show up and what they're able to create in their business.

The first is really around this perfectionistic fantasy. It's where you're waiting for perfect conditions to happen, and they happen so infrequently or possibly never at all, in order to take action. You're going to be waiting for a very long time if things need to be just so, if the expectation is very high about what the conditions are for you to get going or take any kind of action. If that idea resonates, I also want you to check out episode 50 on waiting for perfect conditions, where I talk all about this concept.

The other way I see this show up is when expectations are too high around the frequency or quality of things you aim to do. When that's the case, you're creating a circumstance in your mind that makes the thoughts that keep you stuck a lot more likely. These thoughts are thoughts like why bother, right? Because the expectation, there's such a gap between what you're expecting and what is realistic that you're already just quitting ahead of time.

You're having thoughts like it's not going to work or I can't do that. And when we have these types of defeatist thoughts, there's a defeated theme running throughout if you are hearing that, we are so much less likely to get started or continue on that path of progress because all we can see ahead of us is failure and everyone wants to avoid failure. So if you've already decided it's not going to work or you're not capable, you're not going to start.

The other thought you might notice here is the presence of the expectation that you should be able to do something, either just do it in general or do it a certain way. Maybe you're telling yourself, it seems simple. I should be able to do this.

I know better. Other people do it this way. All of the shoulds, comparisons and judgments take over your brain and become that loud voice in your head that really stops you in your tracks.

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The last way I'm going to share on how I see too high expectations show up is that maybe you can get yourself in motion. Maybe the expectations are low enough to get you going, but then the expectation on the actual thing you're doing is so high that what ends up happening is you take an unnecessarily long time to complete the task or you delay ever finishing the task.

Or maybe you're taking a lot of time and then you just kind of continually abandon ship on it and then come back and tweak. And then you go, oh, it's not good enough, I'm going to have to come back again. So it's this drawing out and never enoughing to the thing that you're doing. And so you never reap the benefit of the work that you've done because there's an expectation that is simply too high of where that thing should be or how it should be like.

As you're listening, I want you to notice, are you nodding your head? If so, it's a good sign that setting lower expectations for yourself could be really helpful in helping you to achieve your goals and being the business owner that you want to be. And now, if you're resistant to setting lower expectations, which so many of my clients are when I suggest this, know that if you don't change something, nothing is likely to change.

We already know that having really high expectations probably isn't working very well. If you're going, oh yeah, that is exactly what's happening to me, we already know that the expectations you have been setting probably are too high and are not working for you.

So you can continue to have those too high expectations and hold on to that fantasy of what something should be or what you should be doing and not move forward. Or you can experiment with a lower entry point and actually start doing what you say you want to do.

You get to choose, and I'm hoping that you'll be willing to play with this with me. You can always go back to those super high standards. But what I know to be true is that the lower expectation, the lower standard actually can help you create a higher quality and more impactful work out in the world.

I know that this is very counterintuitive. So I want to talk about why setting a low expectation can be so powerful, and there's a few reasons. The first is if you

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aren't intimidated or already counting yourself out from having too high of an expectation, you're more likely to get started. And the more you do something, the better you get.

The more you make those small incremental actions or progress, the more you have the opportunity to have those things compound over time, to build your skill set, to get those reps in. If you don't get started, you're never going to get better. So if you aren't intimidated by the expectation, you can get started and then get better along the way, eventually hitting that super high expectation that you originally wanted to have for yourself. It is really the way that you gain that mastery and that excellence that you're looking for.

The other reason it's so helpful to set those low expectations is because you get to sidestep some of that mindset drama that comes up when your expectations are too high. Essentially, you're cutting out a lot of unnecessary fear and pressure for yourself. And instead, giving yourself a circumstance where it's easier to believe I can do this.

If you believe you can do something or that something's doable or that you're capable of doing the thing, you are so much more likely to do it. And again, that goes back to what I was just saying. If you do it, you will get better. You will make progress. You will succeed. And this really means you're creating opportunities for yourself to be successful, and success snowballs.

Even if you have a misstep along the way, even if you don't hit your low expectation, even if you're not perfectly consistent, the low expectation gives you grace. You will see yourself showing up in the way that you want in a way that feels good. And that is motivating. When you continue to show up for yourself, you feel proud of yourself. You feel accomplished.

And these feelings are only going to fuel more of what you want and reinforce the belief that you can do it, that you are making progress, that you are growing, that you are succeeding and it just continues to compound.

To the perfectionistic mindset that so many of my clients have when we begin working together, setting a low standard really sounds counterintuitive to everything that they've been taught or even the way that they have gone about

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achieving the wonderful things that they have achieved thus far. And I want you to know it really does work.

This week I invite you to explore what expectations you have for yourself. Start to notice them and ask yourself to get honest. Are those expectations serving you? I want to give you a process you can follow to examine your own expectations and make the unconscious more conscious and explicit. So you can see what the expectation is, and then you can decide what you want to do with them as you move forward.

So of course, the first step is always going to be awareness. Asking yourself, what am I expecting right now? Sometimes just acknowledging and saying the expectation out loud can be enough for you to think, wait a minute, that's kind of ridiculous. Like the example I gave earlier of never making a mistake. Once we bring that to light or like, wait a second, that's not possible. I can't actually prevent every last mistake or misstep that I might ever have, not possible.

Or maybe you realize that currently on Instagram, you're posting once a month and your expectation of yourself is to now all of a sudden start consistently posting three times a week. And if you logically look at that, you see it's a big jump. That's where you have to be aware then of those shoulds that we talked about earlier of, I should be able to get myself to do it. Other people do it. So I should be able to do it. Maybe it's a big jump for you. Maybe it's not, but we want to see what we are working with.

And once you know what that expectation is that you have of yourself, I want you to then inquire, where did I get this expectation from? And next, what do I think of that source? Do I like where I picked up that expectation or is it something that was just kind of a drive by and my brain latched onto it? Maybe you saw another designer doing it, or you listened to a podcast where a recommendation was given by an expert.

Yes, maybe that expert has some great advice to give, and maybe that expectation works for another person, but we don't even know. Maybe that person who's following that recommendation spent an entire year building up to that. You never know the full context, and that's where it's your responsibility as

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the designer CEO to make conscious decisions for yourself that really serve you and your business and setting those expectations to meet yourself where you are so that you can succeed.

If you find that the expectations you have of yourself feel too high, I want you to then just consider lowering it. Be open to shifting the expectation and ask yourself, what could I commit to that feels easy, doable or approachable? See what comes up. It might be a lot lower than you think it should be, but what if you just gave that a chance?

And if you're feeling a lot of resistance to lowering that expectation, I want you to ask yourself why. What resistance do I have to making this easier for myself? And why is that? Get curious, it will likely bring up some very interesting reflections for you to coach on, either yourself or with a coach or with me if you are one of my clients.

When you start embracing this concept of lower expectations or just low expectations, it is inevitable that you're going to start taking action sooner and more consistently and be playing the long game in your business. You're going to get the reps in and you're going to improve along the way, allowing compounding results to work for you.

The reps of doing the Instagram posts of putting yourself out there in a networking situation of doing a certain type of design or increasing your technical skills, it's going to compound when you get started. And you're going to feel so much lighter, more accomplished and more successful if you allow yourself to see the success when you get started.

To recap, I want you to look at what your expectations are. Pick a specific area in your business, maybe marketing, client delivery, design skills, whatever comes to mind first, and really consider if your current expectations are serving you. And if they're not, check in with yourself and see what might shift for you, both in what you do and your internal experience of doing if you were to lower those expectations.

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And, of course, lower those expectations without judgment, because if you're judging yourself for those low expectations, that's kind of going to defeat the purpose.

I would love, love, love to hear how you play with this in your own life and business. And if you want to share with me, send me a message. You can send me a DM on Instagram or always just reply to one of my emails that I send out. I really do love hearing from you all and hearing how you implement these tools out in the wild.

I also want to let you know that soon I'm going to be sharing details on a very limited availability coaching intensive. I'm going to be offering this to designers who are on my email newsletter list. It's called 90 in 90, and it's a super high-level coaching intensive where you're going to be supported by me. And we're going to create a doable plan for the next quarter so you know exactly what to be working on and when to move your business forward. And of course, if we need to adjust expectations, we'll be doing that as well.

If you're not on the Monday Mindset newsletter list, get on there now. I will put the link in the show notes so that you can sign up. There's only going to be five of these intensives offered, and you want to be the first one to know when the spots open up.

I will of course be back next Wednesday with a brand new episode. And until then, I'm wishing you a beautiful week. I'll talk to you in the next episode.

Have you ever wished I could be your coach? If so, keep listening. For a limited time when you leave a rating and review for the podcast you'll be entered to win a one on one coaching session with me. I can answer your questions and coach you on your unique challenges.

All you have to do is scroll down to the bottom of your podcast app, tap the five stars and leave a review. Tell me your favorite episode, why you look forward to listening every week, or why another designer needs to check out the show. It won't take long, and as a thank you for leaving a rating and review you'll have the opportunity to win a private coaching session with me.

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Just click the link in the show notes to submit your review so I know how to get in touch. I can't wait to select a winner and it might be you. I'll talk to you next week.

Thanks for joining me for this week's episode of *The Interior Design Business CEO*. If you want more tips, tools and strategies visit [www.desicreswell.com](http://www.desicreswell.com). And if you're ready to take what you've learned on the podcast to the next level, I would love for you to check out my signature group coaching program, Out of Overwhelm.