



KEY INSIGHTS FROM OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS AT THE F&TA LIVE EVENT 2015

THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

You're listening to Thrive-By-Design business marketing and lifestyle strategies for your jewelry brand to flourish and thrive. Let's get started.

Tracy: Well hello, hello. Welcome, welcome to the Thrive-By-Design podcast. My name is Tracy Matthews and I'm really excited to be here today for Episode number ten talking about the key insights from our panel of experts at the Flourish & Thrive Academy Live Event 2015 which happened in September. I'm so excited to share this information with you, but before we dive right into the content and what I want to share with you the first thing I want to tell you is that it's really my mission here to give you the best business, marketing, and lifestyle strategies for your jewelry business to flourish and thrive.

Alright so I want to tell you a little bit more about the event. It was our first live event that happened in September of this year of 2015 and Robin and I have been planning it for many, many months. Since it was our first event we didn't really know what to expect. I was terrified. I think a lot of people get terrified when they're starting something new for the first time. I did my first live talk which was very exciting, also scary but it went off; hopefully without too many hitches. Maybe a hitch or two but what can you do?

Alright so I'm going to tell you a little bit more about the event. I talked about how core values play a significant role in building a business that stands out. Robin spoke about sales and sales conversations, building relationships, and things that you should never say and then Rebecca Moskal talked about building your PR presence and getting press. We also ended the event with a great panel of experts. And that panel; Robin and I were so thrilled. We curated.

And a really amazing panel that had different perspectives on all parts of the jewelry business including Rebecca Moskal who is a PR and communications expert who I mentioned earlier. She specializes in fine jewelry and time pieces and she just won the WJA Award for Excellence. Her brand is Communicate LA. She does fine jewelry PR. Sharon Hitchcock was there. She is the jewelry buyer for UncommonGoods. Good friend of ours. We had Drew Riley there who is the former buyer of jewelry for ABC Home. Robin and I both worked with Drew when he was at ABC. He now is a store owner of the store Hunting





with Jake. Really awesome store. Google it. He's amazing. He is the owner and buyer for that store.

We had Megan Dolbee from the Harris Dolbee Showroom. She is the principle of the business and also a sales rep there. Amazing showroom for those of you who are looking for reps. We also had Meghan Patrice Riley who Robin and I both met this year at the SNAG Conference in May and Meghan is a little spitfire. [3:00] She's a really talented designer, very unique perspective and super, super awesome and finally we had Allyson Bainbridge Riccardi who is a brand, marketing, and social media strategist. She specializes in jewelry brands, super cool lady.

So today I wanted to share with you some of the biggest takeaways that I had and that some of the designers had from this event. Now I just want to mention this was our first live event. This was in conjunction with our mastermind program. It was a private event. It wasn't open to the public and we thought we had a really amazing group of about thirty people in the small space in SoHo in New York City super exciting time for us really, really fun.

So I wanted to share with you as I mentioned some of the key takeaways from the event. So I'm just going to kind of go through and talk about each of them. So the first thing that kept coming up over and over whether it be from my talk, from Robin's talk, from Rebecca's talk is the one thing that is going to set you apart as a designer because there are a lot of different jewelry designers out there. There's tons of jewelry. Is your story and your elevator pitch. Literally every single expert on the panel said that the story of your brand was the biggest determining factor on whether or not they would buy your line, on how well the lines sold, and how business can promote a brand.

So you want to really think about that. How you're going to talk about yourself, how you're going to write your story and one of the designers shared in the audience that one of the first things that she did when she was building her website. She was really stuck on her story so she hired a copywriter. So you know not everyone's naturally a writer. If you're not naturally a writer hire someone to help you with it. You can hire an intern who's learning about copywriting, you can hire your sibling or something who is a really good writer. Get it out of your head, share your story and allow someone else to communicate it for you if you're having difficulty doing it yourself.

The next thing which is sort of tied in with the story is to be authentic. Differentiate yourself and your designs from the crowd and forget about





trends because trends come and go. We had a great conversation about differentiating yourself as a designer and really being authentic.

So I want to come to come back to this idea of trends. I told a story when this topic came up on the panel about I was probably about year eight or nine in my business. I'd always designed really personal jewelry which means it was collectible. I really wanted to develop a collection of pieces that people collected over time that they handed down. Now that style of jewelry was kind of going out of style in a way. People were sort of leaning towards this big costumy stuff. It was really around the time when the metals market started spiking so people were really going towards this fake costume and that just really wasn't my thing, my expertise, and what I was good at quite frankly.

So I took a stab at it because I was like oh I need to capitalize this and I ended up doing a whole brass collection for my line and it totally [6:00] flopped. I remember no one really bought it. There was one category that did well and those were the cuff bracelets because they were cheap and bold but other than that the rest of the collection totally flopped. No one wanted it because that's not what they were coming to me for. They were coming to me for beautiful personal jewelry. So keep that in mind that trends come and go. If you're not a trend designer don't try to be a trend designer just because a trend comes up. It's not a good idea. It never works out because you're not being authentic and in alignment with who you are as a designer.

So the next takeaway and this was really based on my talk was that having solid core values is going to inform just about everything you do in your business and it's going to make you stand out in a sea of millions. It's also going to help inform your company culture and it's also going to help your vision and mission statement. So something to think about is are the core values that your business is built on and I'm sure I'll be doing many more talks about that in the coming future so stay tuned.

Then we talked about another takeaway that came from Robin where different words or phrases that you never want to use in a sales conversation. Things like I can't, it's only going to take a minute, it's not my fault because those set you up for failure in the conversation. You always want to be proactive and offer a solution to whatever the issue is that you're dealing with in a sales conversation.

So the next takeaway was that picking up the phone especially with buyers is the biggest relationship builder with your clients. It's really going to help you stand apart as a designer. Robin did some great role playing in her





presentation. It was actually really funny because some of the designers got super into it. But unless you're calling; we laugh about this but unless you're calling a store like ABC Home where they don't answer the phone you want to try and pick up the phone as much as you can especially if you're wholesaling or selling direct to consumer to talk to your customers and build the relationship. Very, very important.

The next big takeaway I loved this conversation is that the future of the jewelry industry is going to be focused on learning to market to millennials and adapting to the way that they buy. So whether or not this is your market it's still an important thing to think about because the baby boomers are sort of phasing out and now the millennials are sort of taking over; are going to be the next boom or phase that are going to take over and have the buying power. So marketing to them and learning how to market in these new ways is going to be really important in the coming future.

The next big takeaway and I love this. This came from Drew. Is that brick and mortar is back on the rise because people are tired of buying online and they want a personal connection again. They want an in store experience. So think about that. For those of you who do want to sell in stores. More stores are starting to open again. There is this sort of movement towards the independent brands [9:00] again and movement away from necessarily these huge mass brands. I'm not saying that those are going to go away but at the same time just remember that brick and mortar is back on the rise.

The next key takeaway was to do your research and make sure that you know who you're actually calling or emailing. So Drew Riley formerly of the ABC Home he was the buyer there. Now has a store called "Hunting with Jake." Now he said that he picks up the phone all the time for his store; answering the phone. People call all the time trying to sell him products and say hi can I please speak with Jake and he just like he has a great sense of comedy on the panel because he was like oh sorry Jake's not here right now can I take a message and he would take a message and just hang up the phone. There's no one there that works at Jake. Jake is just a made up name. So the important thing is that you want to do your research. That you want to investigate the stores that you're calling. Make sure that you know the buyer's name and who the store owner is. Don't just assume because a brand has a name that that's who the owner is. Often times people make up names or create alias's so do your research and make sure you know who you're talking to.

Don't take it personally when you don't hear back from someone. This was another key takeaway. Especially in PR, especially when you're reaching out to





wholesale accounts, and sometimes quite frankly even if you're working direct to consumer you just have to remember that people are busy. Editors get in excess of a hundred emails a day sometimes. Store buyers their phones are often ringing off the hook and they're dealing with multiple responsibilities or they're getting tons of emails every day from people trying to sell them and things can get lost in the email. And then your personal clients might also be busy. The key is to be persistent but not annoying. Follow up if you don't hear back. Don't take it personally. You never know what's going on with someone else's life and that is a really important thing to remember unless you know.

So while Robin and I aren't really into consignment but consigning with a store who is committing to testing products first and then open to buying the product once it sells can potentially be a great partner. Now I keep bringing up Drew but he had some really great insights and this was one of the key insights that he had. Sometimes he doesn't have the dollars to buy or sometimes he really likes something but he's not sure how the customers going to receive it so in certain situations consignment can work really well to your favor. If you let a store test out a product it does really well and if it's with the right partner who is behind you and really wants to promote your work it can be a very beneficial situation and Drew in fact was talking many times about how he's done this with designers and then he eventually ended up buying into their line for the store and giving them real estate on the sales floor. So it's a good way to get into a store if it's the right store and they're really committed to promoting your work.

The next key takeaway that we had was that brand copywriting is very important. We spoke [\[12:00\]](#) about this briefly earlier when we were talking about the story but if you aren't a writer find someone to help you. This is really, really, really important and something that you really can't go with bad copy, bad pictures, and a lot of other things. It's very important and you know that's another takeaway we talk about this all the time. Photography is key. You want to make sure that you have amazing photographs of your work so that you can promote it online, so you can promote it on social media, so that you can get people actually on your website, or you can get buyers to open your emails and take a look at the beautiful jewelry that you design. Very, very important.

Next takeaway is that in person connections cannot compare with virtual one's. So meet people in person as much as you can. That means trying to get face time with store buyers, trying to meet people at conferences, connect with your mentors and leaders in real life, in real time and then also connect





with your colleagues or your peers the people who are in the same market as you for instance in this industry obviously like most of us are jewelry designers or makers or jewelry artists.

You want to get involved with organizations that are going to bring you together. Some of the organizations that I love are the Women's Jewelry Association, SNAG (Society of North American Goldsmiths), MJSA, Flourish & Thrive Academy. Our organization it's amazing and we're trying to have more live events to get people together. So it's really important to remember these things and to get face time with people because there is nothing like having one on one contact and this is especially important with your buyers. You want to meet your clients in person if you possibly can. You want to spend some face time and deliver the products. Have coffee with them. Do whatever you can to build the relationships.

And I loved, loved, loved hearing Meghan Patrice Riley had so many brilliant takeaways throughout the entire; throughout the entire panel conversation and I loved listening to her because she is just a fiery spitball if you've ever heard her speak or ever heard her talk. She really is someone who is not afraid to sell her work. So the key takeaway that we really all got from her is that if you learn to sell your work and you aren't afraid to do what it takes and you build the relationships you can have a strong business even if you start in an economy that is awful or that just crashed or whatever.

So she started her business right after the economy crashed and had tons of stores right away and had a really successful brand really quickly and you know she did it on a shoestring. She wasn't investing a ton of money in trade shows. She just got on the phone and called. She had ninja strategies where every year she would send out product. Maybe you know the first year it wasn't too much product but she'd target the stores she wanted to get into and send them a couple samples just on her because she wanted people wearing her jewelry. That was the most important thing and if they wore it and they liked it maybe they would buy. So that might **[15:00]** not be available for everyone because that is an expensive tactic but it's something to get you face time and in front of a buyer and to get your product moving and to get people behind your work and to get you selling your work which is very, very important.

Alright so those are some of the major takeaways that we have from the live event. We had such a blast. It was such an amazing event. We had about thirty designers there which was awesome. I got to meet so many designers that I had never met in person before which was really, really fun and we even heard





the story of one designer that had her best year ever and really was super excited because she got her first ten thousand dollar order after learning everything that she needed to know on promoting her business through Flourish & Thrive Academy which is a really exciting thing to hear and super fun.

This event was awesome. We hope to have a lot more live events in the future so stay tune on that and I can't wait to keep bringing you more amazing takeaways from designers and other amazing jewelry industry experts like PR, marketing, branding, store buyers, store owners, you name it. We're bringing them all here.

If you would like more information on how you can support your jewelry business make sure you join us over at www.flourishthriveacademy.com. That's flourishthriveacademy.com and I just want to thank you again for listening today. If you really enjoyed the show and got a lot of value out of it we'd love for you to do us a huge favor. Make sure you subscribe to our podcast, rate the show, and then write us a little review.

I'm super excited to keep bringing you all this great content and inspiration every single week. I'm Tracy Matthews. Take care until next time.

