



PR & MARKETING “TODD REED STYLE” WITH LIZ KANTNER THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

We handle it is we just keep moving forward. Keep making our brand stronger because that's all we can control.

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Tracy: Well hello there. Welcome to the Thrive-by-Design podcast. I'm Tracy Matthews of Flourish and Thrive Academy and I'm really excited today because I have a special guest here. I have been following my special guest on social media for awhile now and I just love her perspective on jewelry and the way she sort of showcases the brand that she works for and it's been my mission from the beginning of Flourish and Thrive Academy to really bring in interesting guests of all parts of the jewelry industry. Because I want to promote things that everyone wants to hear and wants to listen to and of course we want to hear from PR experts who are working with some of the biggest brands around right.

So my guest today is Liz Kantner and she currently works with one of my favorite designers Todd Reed heading up PR and digital marketing for Todd. So I'm excited to get some insights from Liz about how she does PR and marketing Todd Reed style. So welcome Liz.

Liz: Hi, thanks for having me.

Tracy: Oh it's so great to have you here because we were talking a little bit a moment ago about how I've been following you, kind of stalking you on social media for awhile.

Liz: I love that.

Tracy: And I'm just so excited that you wanted to come in and talk on the show today.

Liz: I can talk jewelry and marketing for hours.

Tracy: So can I so let's do it.

Liz: Sounds good.

Tracy: So before we get started into some questions that I have for you I'd love to just do a formal introduction so I'll just pop right into that. Liz Kantner is obsessed with jewelry even though she started her career in health care and then digital marketing for consumer brands. She moved to Denver in July of 2012 with her boyfriend. Found Todd Reed a week later and began her career in the jewelry industry. She





currently is the Marketing and Communication Specialist at Todd Reed Jewelry and handles all digital marketing and PR for the illustrious jewelry brand. Alright so I'm really excited to get started Liz. Will you tell me a little bit more about yourself and your journey into jewelry PR?

Liz: Sure. So I actually found Todd on Craig's List and had no idea who he was. I didn't know it was possible to work in the jewelry industry. I actually kind of lumped it in with the fashion industry and that kind of felt like something I'd never work in just because of how it's portrayed in movies like "The Devil Wears Prada" and stuff like that.

Tracy: Exactly.

Liz: But then I found it, and I just dove in because I have been obsessed with jewelry for ever just because my grandmother collected all kinds of crazy costume jewelry and she always had a brooch on and big earrings and [3:00] I've always liked jewelry I just didn't know it was a career path for me. So when I found Todd on Craig's List and he brought me in to do social media specifically to start and it's so cool and it was so exciting because working in consumer brands in an agency it was hard to do content; find great content to share.

But when I started at Todd Reed I was in this office that was gorgeous and Todd was sharing his story with me and the entire jewelry making process was right there with I think there were about ten Bench Jewelers when I started and now we're up to twenty working at a time.

Tracy: Wow.

Liz: Yeah so you can just pop into the shop and see what they're working on and it's just really cool and Todd's always around so having access to the designer, understanding his brand, and where he's coming from makes it so much easier to share his story.

Tracy: Oh that's so cool. I love hearing that because as we like to say over here at Flourish and Thrive Academy it's so; the one thing that really differentiates yourself as a designer is not only your design perspective which Todd has one of the strongest design perspectives I've ever seen. But it's also really about sharing your story and how you got into it in the first place and how the propels you forward as a designer.

Liz: Exactly and Todd has always been totally transparent as far as where his inspiration comes from and his process and how he makes things and I think that is unique in an industry where people kind of keep themselves a little closed off.

Tracy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Liz: Just from copying and things like that which is understandable but I think the more transparent and authentic you are the stronger your brand becomes so the harder it is for people to copy you.





Tracy: Yes. Well because it would be so obvious if someone copied Todd.

Liz: Right, totally and I mean this isn't what we're talking about but it seems like a hot topic in the industry right now what is original design.

Tracy: Yes.

Liz: And what is copying and the way we handle it is we just keep moving forward, keep making our brand stronger because that's all we can control.

Tracy: That is all you can control. That's such a great point because my co-founder Robin and I always say when designers are like oh well you know I found this designer and her stuff is just like mine but at the end of the day a circle is a circle is a circle. You didn't invent the circle.

Liz: Exactly.

Tracy: So call it. What's your interpretation of the circle? Make it different and unique enough so that it's a different circle because creating this strong design perspective is really what makes your jewelry desirable and what makes people want to wear it and makes you known as a designer. It starts with design but it starts with so many other things as well that really creating the strong perspective which I think is important.

Liz: Definitely.

Tracy: Yeah well thank you for bringing that up [6:00] because it's a really great point.

Liz: Sure.

Tracy: So we found out a little bit about how you found Todd. I love that he found you on Craig's List. That's so cool because I've hired many of my staff over the years on Craig's List too so I'm not alone. I've got to love that.

Liz: Yeah totally. Well even at fifty people we still hire people on Craigs List.

Tracy: That's pretty cool, awesome. So what are you doing for Todd that's unique and really working right now for exposure?

Liz: Sure well Instagram is huge right now and I think that's obvious to most people. That is kind of the new, hot social media site. I think it's really important for a lot of aspects of the business. So I personally think it helps me connect with editors from a PR standpoint and then I think it also helps us connect with potential customers. Sorry that was my dog.





- Tracy: That's okay. Real live podcast.
- Liz: So I think Instagram is huge right now in general for both selling and for brand awareness and telling your story.
- Tracy: So are you guys actually physically selling off of Instagram?
- Liz: Yes. So we have to retail locations and then we have 70+ wholesale dealers and so a lot of times people will comment where can I buy this and I'll direct them to the closest location and we usually sell from Instagram. So the amount of sales we get is pretty shocking in that it's free you just have to put your time and effort in too.
- Tracy: That's amazing. Are you guys doing any paid advertising on Instagram? Just curious.
- Liz: We are not.
- Tracy: Okay cool. So you mentioned that you connect with editors on social media. What's your strategy for that?
- Liz: So I think it's really following the editors you're interested in connecting with and commenting on the photos when you have something relevant to say and liking photos that make sense and then when you email them they might be familiar with your brand. I think it's important to kind of have several touch points and not just do a cold email. So if you've been following them for a while on Instagram and maybe you noticed they followed you back then I think it's primetime to send an email about stopping in and doing a desk side or talking to them on the phone.
- Tracy: So when you do desk sides because you guys are based in Denver. Are you doing that when you fly out to New York?
- Liz: Yes. So I'm trying to come to New York about four times a year and also a great time to meet editors if you don't have the ability to travel to New York four times a year.
- Tracy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Liz: Is at trade shows.
- Tracy: Yes.
- Liz: Is a huge opportunity because everybody's usually there.
- Tracy: That's great, great advice. So it I love what you said about having multiple touch points so you're reaching out on them on Instagram. You're liking, you're commenting, and you're doing it [9:00] in a way that's authentic so that you can build an authentic relationship with the editors beforehand and then once you email them then they sort of have an idea often times of who you are and they remember you. I've done many sort of blog posts, podcasts, whatever about staying top of mind to editors because I think it's really important to





have all these multiple touch points but also staying top of mind; having them remember who you are and it requires consistency wouldn't you say?

Liz: Yes definitely. I mean brand consistency is huge in every aspect of what you do and Todd's really taught me that because if you stop by one of our retail stores you'll notice that the interior design matches the brand, matches the jewelry design, matches the way we promote our website, and also the story you get on Instagram. So I think that having that core strong brand is important for everything you do in your business. So yeah consistency is huge.

Tracy: I love; yeah it's so important, so, so important. So we talked a lot about Instagram. Are there any other avenues that you just are loving right now as far as social media goes or as far as marketing goes that is creating a strong impact for Todd?

Liz: Sure. Well so I'm just testing the waters with Periscope and I think it has potential to be huge and I know people like Cindy Edelstein have done little interviews which I think is so cool and that's kind of where I got the idea from but I've been going into our workshop and just filming what going up; Periscoping what's going on and what Periscope is is a live broadcast. So it's cool to bring people in and show them what's happening right that second because you can't get more authentic than showing somebody what's going on without any editing and just being like this is our culture.

Tracy: That is so cool to think of it in that way I mean Periscope. A lot of the online entrepreneurs are using Periscope for different reasons. We should be Periscoping right now but what I think is so cool is how awesome would it be to Periscope the design process because I think people really are fascinated; especially people who aren't from the creative class. Where they don't understand how people come up with ideas or how they technically have skills that they could make something out of metal with their hands. They're just fascinated by it and what a better way to create fascination and delight then to show behind the scenes of your work.

Liz: Right, exactly and so I'm going to eventually get Todd in the Periscope world. Him designing, him looking at gemstones, laying them out because I have access to that so I think it's so cool and also I think that the [12:00] direction of the industry right now is getting more towards this transparency where client knows exactly what goes into the process because not everybody has access to seeing how jewelry is made. But it makes what we've seen by inviting our clients into the process is that it makes them more attached to our brand and they become lifelong clients.

Tracy: That's amazing. I'm curious that you mentioned Todd's design process. I would love to hear a little bit more about he approaches design.

Liz: Sure. So he is always sketching; truly always sketching. The number of napkins you see around the office with little (12:41 unclear) on





them is wild. But he has a reservoir of designs that he pulls from but also when we get new stones in especially the big one of a kind stones he'll take some time usually like a few days to sit down with his stones and sketch and lay them out on the paper and he draws everything to scale. So that's kind of his process when it comes to design and then he works closely with the shop leads; head jewelers.

Tracy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Liz: Who actually create the design and he talks about how he wants it made because he draws in 2D so he doesn't do (13:22 unclear). We don't do CAD or anything like that. So he works with the head jewelers to actually create the piece and then stops in the shop periodically to check on the progress and all that.

Tracy: Well that makes me feel so good because I have been sketching in 2D. I've never really; the only time I do things in 3D I mean I don't personally do it but I have my model makers do things in 3D only when the customer wants to see it because they can't understand.

Liz: Right.

Tracy: It makes me feel so good that someone as established as Todd Reed has a similar technique that I've been using for my approach for so many years.

Liz: Yeah, cool.

Tracy: So it's pretty, pretty cool to hear about how he approaches it because I think it's interesting. I mean you must think it's so interesting to see him sketch something on paper and then see it come to life and you're like oh my gosh this is like the real piece of jewelry.

Liz: It's so cool because a lot of times you get the gist from his drawings; what it's going to look like.

Tracy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Liz: But other times you have no idea and it's just a huge surprise. Also side note we should get Todd on this podcast.

Tracy: Yes we should. I was going to ask you that after but now we're hooking it up. I'd love to have him on.

Liz: On air.

Tracy: I would love that, awesome. So as designers who are building a brand what are some of the most important things that they should remember as far as marketing themselves goes? To be consistent, to be authentic, to keep it going because often times these are one person shows. They don't have a team like [15:00] Todd does.





- Liz: Sure. I think the key always is to know exactly who you are. I think that is the first step to discovering what your brand is because I think a lot of times people force a brand image that they think they want but if you truly know who you are and I'm speaking from knowing Todd. Todd knows exactly who he is and that's why you see his brand as really strong and you see his designs as really strong because he knows exactly who he is and he has not wavered from that in the past twenty years. So I think that that's just the ultimate key.
- Tracy: That's amazing and that's great advice; great advice and great words of wisdom. Is there anything else that you would like to add as far as words of wisdom, fabulous advice, anything that you see trending in the jewelry industry right now that's important?
- Liz: Yeah sure. So we talked about a lot of things.
- Tracy: Yes we have.
- Liz: Not PR but that's fine because when you're working for a small business you touch on so many aspects of it but it's never just one job rule.
- Tracy: Yes.
- Liz: But going back to PR real quick I think that it's so important to read the magazines you want to be in. I think sometimes people just like cold email, cold call, and they don't think about it. You have to do your research. You need to like say you want to be in Marie Claire. You need to read issues of Marie Claire. Understand what they're covering and understand what story they're trying to tell so you can pitch it properly. You can reach out with pieces of your line that fit into what it seems like they're trying to cover. So I think that's really important is to just really do your research. You can't just walk in assuming they'll like your design and that's the end of the story. It's a lot of work on your end too.
- Tracy: And I think it's also important to be choosing the right; I mean this is all part of that once you do your research but choosing the right pieces to pitch that are in alignment with whatever they're working on. So how do you personally figure out what to pitch and when?
- Liz: Well so I read magazines obsessively.
- Tracy: Yeah.
- Liz: So I think it's partially that. When I see a new design that Todd has I immediately send it to the people who I think would really love it and it's just like a constant relationship building. So once you've had a desk side with somebody then you know them better and then you can email them and then you can meet up with them again when you're in New York and it takes a long time. You can't expect things to just happen. You have to really work at it like a true relationship.





- Tracy: So when I had my wholesale line I used to do desk sides all the time when I wasn't living in New York and then once I'd moved here [18:00] and I was in InStyle all the time and Lucky when Lucky was still up and running.
- Liz: I miss Lucky.
- Tracy: I know it was one of my favorites. Anyway so how hard was it to get your first desk side and do you find that it's an easy thing to just pop in?
- Liz: It's really hard. Especially me I live in Colorado and it's really hard. My advice is to start with the industry.
- Tracy: Okay.
- Liz: Editors; Cindy Edelstein is a great person to talk too, the gals at National Jeweler in store in design. I think that's a great place to start and then there's so many jewelry blogs to reach out to and really practice with and get your relationships going and not practice I'm not saying that they are; they're just easier to reach than the Vogue's of the world.
- Tracy: Right, absolutely. That's great, great advice.
- Liz: Yeah.
- Tracy: Thank you.
- Liz: Yeah and then you start creating your contacts. You meet more people. I think you should always just be trying to connect with people.
- Tracy: And so you know editors are notorious for moving around a lot.
- Liz: Yes.
- Tracy: Have you found that to be an issue or you're just always following where they go?
- Liz: You kind of have to; that's a great part of social media and Instagram too.
- Tracy: Yes.
- Liz: Is that you can find out where people are going much easier.
- Tracy: That's so true.
- Liz: Then I used to be able too. I used to have to buy a service to kind of keep track like (19:31 unclear) as an example but I think now with social media and LinkedIn you can really follow it yourself.



- Tracy: Yeah that's great advice. I remember I'd be working with an editor and then all of a sudden I'm like why isn't she responding to my emails from that sample we sent and then all of a sudden she's at another magazine or.
- Liz: Right and also we're working in fine jewelry.
- Tracy: Yes.
- Liz: So not everybody can send stuff so you really have to think about what you want because I mean all of Todd's pieces are one of a kind so we have to be very careful about deciding if a piece should go to a trunk show or if it should go to a photo shoot and I think that you need to not just drop your whole plan because Vogue wants to pull a piece. I think you need to really strategically think about what makes sense for your company.
- Tracy: See that's interesting. I didn't realize that Todd only did one of a kind.
- Liz: We have some stock pieces that can be recreated but in general everything is totally one of a kind.
- Tracy: Wow that is amazing.
- Liz: Yeah we don't cast. Each jeweler makes a piece from start to finish and yeah so even if it's a piece that can be recreated there is nuances that are slightly different in each design.
- Tracy: That's super cool. So that's even more interesting because one of the things that designers ask often is [21:00] I get bored making the same piece over and over again.
- Liz: You don't have too.
- Tracy: Like what? Sorry.
- Liz: You don't have too.
- Tracy: I know and it's amazing to me that Todd has built such a huge brand off of almost all one of a kinds which is amazing.
- Liz: Right yeah you don't have too. I mean like I was saying before you need to know who you are. You don't want to be just turning out jewelry that you're bored with.
- Tracy: Yeah.
- Liz: But that's so not authentic.
- Tracy: And I think the thing that makes it in a way doable for Todd too is that he's working in a premium price point and I think the higher the price point the easier it is to do one of a kinds successfully.
- Liz: Right.





- Tracy: Because there's more I use the word desire again but desire attached to it because it's unique and it's a collector's piece and it's something that people are going to be wanting to buy because it's something that they can only get one of and they know it's of certain value or whatever.
- Liz: Right definitely.
- Tracy: If that makes sense.
- Liz: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Tracy: Cool. Awesome well this has been such a fun conversation. Is there anything else about PR that you feel like we missed speaking of?
- Liz: Yeah I mean I feel like I could talk for way longer about it but yeah I think that's the basics. I mean know who you are, really focus on your brand, and be strategic about who you're reaching out too and where you're sending your jewelry.
- Tracy: Be strategic about who you're reaching out too and where you're sending your jewelry. Super important and do the research to make sure that you're not barking up the wrong tree and that you're focusing on the right outlets.
- Liz: And relationships.
- Tracy: So Liz before we wrap up is there any fun PR moment or experience that you've had within the last year doing all this PR?
- Liz: Yes actually. So when I started at Todd Reed like I said I started in social media and I didn't think PR was an opportunity for me. I didn't think that was the way my career was going to go but it's worked out. I love connecting with people but it's been kind of an interesting couple years because I'm learning. I'm teaching myself and so I was in New York I think it was maybe a year and a half, two years ago doing desk side appointments and I was at Harper's Bizarre I think but Anna Winter walks out and gets on the elevator and I'm wearing a jean jacket because it's the middle of summer and there was so much; like the air conditioning in these buildings is insane and I only had a jean jacket to put on. Anna Winter saw me in a jean jacket.
- Tracy: I love that story. That's hilarious and I was mentioning to you that I ran into like I know Anna but I ran into her at the movie theatres randomly in the fall which is super funny but she's such an icon who wouldn't be excited or surprised or fascinated or something to see her.
- Liz: Right.
- Tracy: In an elevator.
- Liz: When you're in the Conde Nast building [24:00] but sometimes you do I guess.





Tracy: That's pretty cool. That is a super cool experience and I think that's a once in a lifetime opportunity right there.

Liz: Hopefully next time I'm going to be dressed better though.

Tracy: Yeah you'll be wearing your Prada.

Liz: Yes exactly.

Tracy: Alright Liz this has been such a fun interview. First of all I want to thank you for being here today but then second of all where can everyone find you and where can they find Todd's jewelry?

Liz: Sure. So Todd's Instagram which I run currently is @toddreedyjewelry. I recommend it because I mean his designs are just insane and it's not always the same image. I feel like we're really telling our story there. Check out his website www.toddreedy.com. I blog there three or four times a week and then also my personal Instagram page is @liz_kantner and then I also blog at www.lizkantner.com.

Tracy: Okay so one more question.

Liz: Sure.

Tracy: Which is also going to be a surprise question what are you blogging on Todd's website about?

Liz: Everything. So we're really; Todd loves community and loves sharing aspects of his business that you wouldn't see just by walking in the door. So Todd just collaborated on a wreath for charity that was auctioned off for charity so there is a post about that. There is a post about a recent party we had at our Boulder studio. It was our five year anniversary and then there's a post about our windows; our holiday windows. We talk about everything. We talk about local restaurants we love. We talk about products we love that all fit into who we are as a brand.

Tracy: That's amazing and Todd's really lucky to have you.

Liz: Oh thank you.

Tracy: You are awesome. I love your energy.

Liz: (25:50 unclear) him.

Tracy: Liz once again thanks so much for being here today and thank you all for listening. This has been such a fun interview and I'm so glad to have you here. We really want to hear from you though. So we'd love to hear more about what you think about the podcast. So if you like what you're listening to make that you subscribe to the podcast, write us a little review, and make sure that you rate us so that we know how we're doing. Thanks so much again for listening today and until next time take care. This is Tracy Matthews.

