Building a Successful e-Design Business

by:

Sheilah MacSporran
DESIGNFILES CEO

design*files*

Building an e-Design business isn't easy. I'll tell you that upfront. Especially when you're just starting out and have to learn everything from scratch.

I know right now you're probably scared of failing, you might have doubts and about a million questions, and that's okay. Because I also know that you're here because you are passionate about interior design and can't wait to find new clients whose lives and spaces only you can transform.

This is your most important asset right now. Passion can't be taught and it will take you farther than anything I can teach you. The rest of it though, the marketing, the tools, the pricing, the clientele–I've got you covered.

Over the last four years I have spoken with thousands of designers to help them overcome hurdles that keep their business from being profitable like landing clients, and keeping their projects on schedule.

What you're about to read is a culmination of proven-to-work strategies that interior designers across the globe have used to build a customer base, market their services and automate their workflow, transforming their businesses into productive and profitable machines.

It can take years to learn all the ins and outs of growing a successful e-Design business on your own, but this e-book will give your business the jump start it needs so you can bypass the trial and error stage and go straight to turning a profit.

So if you are ready to put in the work and make your dream business a reality, read on. Your future is waiting.

What You Will Learn

1   The growth of e-Design and why you should consider it

2   The benefits of e-Design for both you and your clients

3   How to price packages (and common mistakes to avoid)

4   How to market to and land your ideal clients

5   How to double and triple your profits with affiliate links

6   "Must have" design tools to run profitable projects

Who I Am and Why You Can Trust Me

Hi, I'm Sheilah, I'm not a big fan of talking about myself and how awesome I am, but because my business demands it, I will. This should be your first lesson by the way, learn how to get over the discomfort of selling yourself!

Let's start over. Hi, I'm Sheilah MacSporran, the CEO of DesignFiles, and I've spent the last decade creating design tools, first for homeowners and now exclusively for interior designers. This is my lifeblood, my business, and my passion–to make interior design tools that are functional, fun and save creative business owners time and money.

" **For the past four years I've dedicated my time to speaking with interior designers around the world to understand exactly what they need to thrive, and developing tools that make their businesses run more efficiently.**"

This open and collaborative relationship is the reason my team has been able to build some of the industries most innovative and loved design tools and the reason DesignFiles has quickly become one of the fastest growing interior design platforms in the world.

You could say I know a thing or two about how e-Design works, and why it's profitable. My business is built around that entire idea.

I also know how to build a business from scratch and how hard it is to start out with zero clients and zero funding, totally unsure of how far this whim would go.

I was successful because designers just like you backed me up, and taught me how to better serve the interior design community. So this is my little way of giving back.

My hope is that this ebook will give you a leg up at the start of your journey, and help the design community around the world that has helped me turn my DesignFiles dream into a reality.

Incredible things do happen when we support one another, so I'm here, I'm all in for you, and I know with a little guidance you too will find success.

—

Sheilah

Why e-Design Is Growing

In order to understand the growth of e-Design, we first need to understand the industry that's fueling it–online furniture sales.

Online furniture sales represent one of the strongest e-commerce categories in the United States and has out-performed brick and mortar furniture sales for the past 5 years.

Let's break this down by looking at one of the biggest retailers in the industry. Williams-Sonoma has a total of 586 stores in the US alone, yet **54% of the company's revenue is generated online**.

With worldwide online furniture sales expected to reach a market volume of $289.3 billion in 2023 this shift is a trend interior designers can't ignore.

So, Why Is Everyone Shopping Online?

I know you probably don't need to be convinced, lets just say if your Amazon cart looks anything like mine, you're not going to need to buy any more laundry detergent or cat food for a while. But furniture sales are their own beast. So why furniture and why now?

Consumers are far more tech savvy
It's so convenient and easy to research products online, compare prices and find the best deals. Include the purchase confidence that customer reviews provide, and the highly detailed product images and it's no wonder people are comfortable buying a couch they've never seen in person, or even a new mattress they never tested out.

Better variety
The amount of time it would take you to go to all of the big brand stores to shop for a couch would be insane. Online the options are endless, and easy to save and click through (thank you Pinterest). Even if a brick and mortar store carries the collections you love, they'll never have the floor space to display it all. By jumping online you can quickly browse every item in every collection and in every possible variation in the small minutes you have between work and bedtime.

Better prices
Stores that don't have brick and mortar counterparts, like Wayfair or Joss and Main don't carry the same overhead costs, and can offer their products at cheaper prices. You've likely run into this problem yourself, where a client was able to find a product online at a better price than what you could offer. This is becoming a big issue for interior designers who rely on mark-ups as a source of revenue and it's one of the main reasons many designers are rethinking their business model.

Fast and free shipping
Amazon is making us wildly impatient. We want immediate gratification and two-day shipping is just too good to pass up. As online furniture retailers jump on board to offer fast, efficient and free shipping, the convenience and ease of shopping online is making it harder for brick and mortar stores to compete.

Amazing customer service
The ecommerce boom has made great customer service a smart commodity for big retailers. With live chat support, free shipping, product tracking, fast delivery, white glove service, hassle-free returns, and so much more, companies are going the extra mile to support their customers. And because of this, consumers are more comfortable than ever with checking out online.

designfiles

The convenience of shopping from home 24/7

I don't need to tell you how nice it is to stay in your thermostat controlled house, drinking a cup of tea while you shop. There's no need to go out in horrible weather, deal with traffic or stand in line at crowded stores and you don't have to dress up for anyone but yourself. Online you can shop multiple stores in a fraction of the time, from the comfort of your living room sofa.

This long list of perks combined with tech advancements has created a perfect storm for e-Design to become a changing force in our industry.

This is not a fad service that's going away anytime soon. The future of interior design is online and as a designer it just makes sense to learn how you can adapt and profit from the changing tides of the industry.

Benefits of e-Design for Interior Designers

Here's a look at some of the main benefits that make e-Design so enticing for designers.

Geography is not a factor
By exposing your brand to millions of potential clients you would otherwise not be able to work with, you can rapidly build your business.

A simplified business model
You can forget the hassle of ordering, shipping and dealing with products that need to be returned and spending hours on the road is a thing of the past. e-Design allows you to spend your time doing what you love to do–DESIGN!

Time flexibility
One of the greatest advantages of running an e-Design business is that you're no longer confined by a particular area, country or time zone. You can build your business in off hours from your day job, while you're taking care of your children, or even while you're traveling the world.

Easy add-on service
If you have a full service interior design, decorating or staging business that you don't want to completely uproot, e-Design is a great way to add an additional revenue stream and expand an already healthy business by exposing it to a whole new audience.

Economical entry point
You likely have potential clients who would love to work with you but feel your current offerings are a little out of their reach. Providing an economical e-Design option can help get these clients in the door where you can win their trust and sell them on your additional services.

Benefits of e-Design for Your Client

With all of those furniture options at their fingertips, why is e-Design valuable to your potential client? Once you answer this question you will know exactly how to sell your e-Design offerings.

Source overwhelm
With the accessibility of online shopping, comes an abundance of choices that would be hard for anyone to sort through. Customers often have a hard time committing to a purchase because they lack the confidence to know that it's the right piece.

By working with a professional designer they can feel confident in their purchases and finally achieve the look they've always wanted.

Transparent business model
Simple straight-forward pricing. Client's love this. You clearly define what's included and they pay a flat fee up front. There's no additional costs or services, and no invoice surprises at the end of the project.

Avoid costly mistakes
You've seen it happen a thousand times–Homeowners rarely put together an entire design plan before they start buying products. The result is a mis-matched space, a lot of costly mistakes and a load of disappointment. When a client hires an e-Designer, they get a clear design board, a complete shopping list, and a fail-safe approach to transforming their space.

It's budget friendly

To many, hiring an interior designer feels way out of reach. e-Design is an economical option that opens the door to a whole new audience of clients who will happily measure their own space and do the installation themselves if it gives them access to the advice and guidance of a professional designer.

Clients aren't limited by geography

Finding a designer in their local area that shares the same taste and values can be tricky for clients. e-Design makes it possible for homeowners to source their interior design soulmate and get the service they want from a designer they trust.

How to Price Your Design Packages

Design Premium
$899/room

- ✓ Initial 1 Hour Phone Call
- ✓ 2 Concept Boards
- ✓ 2 Final Room Designs
- ✓ Direct Message With Designer
- ✓ Product Shopping List
- ✓ Itemized Floor Plan
- ✓ How-To Guide With Notes

Design
$525/room

- ✓ Initial 30
- ✓ 2 Concep
- ✓ 1 Final Ro
- ✓ Direct Message With Designer
- ✓ Product Shopping List
- ✓ Itemized Floor Plan
- ✓ How-To Guide With Notes

Pricing your packages can feel like the most complicated part of your business. How do you entice clients while still keeping your electricity on? Don't worry, it only takes a little bit of math to figure out what to charge, and it's the kind of math I like–Dollars and cents.

In this chapter I'll give you a simple method that will make pricing your design packages quick, easy and failproof.

I know the first thing that you'll want to do is see what other designers are charging, and while it may seem like a logical way to start, this is never a good idea. What you are able to offer clients is absolutely unique to your business because you are a creative professional. Not only do you offer unparalleled design in your own particular style and vision, you also offer the chance at working with you–someone who is responsible, and efficient, who honors your clients needs and ideas.

But Sheilah, you ask, won't clients just hire the large e-Design companies because they are so cheap?

And my answer is this: There will always be an audience looking for the lowest rates they can get, but is that really who you want to work with? What will it truly cost you and your business to fight for clients who would rather have a cheaper price tag?

1 **Cheap packages = zero profit**
Many large e-Design companies have design packages as low as $79 or $149. This is insane for a designer to compete with. In order to make any money at those rates you would need to turn around your deliverables in under an hour, and while your client may be thrilled, you and I both know they'd receive a subpar product and you'd need a serious day at the spa. Goodbye profits!

2 Your expertise is worth more

I know you. I know you work your butt off to create designs you're proud of, and I guarantee you already work too hard and too long for what you're getting paid. Okay, so you love it, but that doesn't mean you should be paid less. In fact, I believe that the more you love your work, the more you should get paid. If you love your work, you're going to work harder for your clients, and this is exactly what they're paying for. So while there is an audience of potential clients out there looking for those really low rate design packages, I say let the larger e-Design companies have them. It's not worth your time and effort to fight so hard for a client that's paying you peanuts.

Instead, what you want to do is take the time to learn how to market your business more effectively so you can draw in your ideal clients. Clients that understand what you are worth and are willing to pay more for the opportunity to work with you.

All-In-One e-Design Software—Free Trial

*design*files

Determining the Right Prices for Your Design Packages

So how do you determine exactly what you are worth? Easy, we'll start by thinking about the big picture for your business.

What's your yearly income goal for your business?

Haven't thought about this?

Well, are you building an e-Design business as your side hustle, or are you planning on generating 100% of your income with this business?

Take a moment to sit down with your finances and really think about what your yearly financial goal is.

When you have a number you're happy with follow these steps:

1 Divide your yearly income goal by 12 to determine monthly income.

2 Divide your monthly income by 4 to determine your weekly income.

3 To determine your hourly rate, divide your weekly expected income by the number of hours you have available to work.

This will tell you how many hours you will need to work every week to achieve your financial goal, and where you should be pricing yourself to maintain your lifestyle.

Yearly Income	$60,000.00
Monthly Income	$5,000.00
Weekly Income	$1,250.00

If your rate is $50/hr, you'll have to work 25 hrs/week to achieve your desired $60K yearly income.

Now Determine Your Packages and Prices

Now that you know how many hours you will need to work each week, it's time to break down your design packages and figure out how long it will take to complete each of those deliverables.

Here are the most common deliverables for e-Designers:

A set number of concept boards (usually 1-2)

At least 2-3 rounds of revisions.

A final design board

A product shopping list (include shop links and purchasing information)

Itemized floor plan

A how-to guide with designer notes
Ex. Guidance on where and how to hang artwork, curtain rods or light fixtures. Or how to anchor furniture over a rug and display decor accents

If you're just launching your e-Design business, this list constitutes a good basic package. Keep it simple now and as you grow you can build on your packages and offer more value to your customers.

More complex and expensive packages could include:

Elevation drawings

Full 3D room renderings

Product ordering services

What you offer your clients is completely up to you, it's all a part of your particular business plan.

Test, Test, Test

Once you've decided what your deliverables are going to be, the next step is to test how long each one will take you.

1. Do some sample projects to nail down your process (this is a great time to redesign your mom's/friend's/neighbor's space.

2. Determine how long it takes on average to complete all the deliverables.

3. Then take that number and multiply it by your hourly rate.

This will give you the base price for your design packages so you can give clients a flat rate and ensure that you are paid fairly for every hour you work.

Now that you have your package price, add fifteen percent. You and I both know that not every project is smooth sailing. This fifteen percent is your buffer to help you cover those hours you have to spend redoing a design board or writing an extra long email about the particular value of single vs double rod window dressings. You know what I mean.

So Now You Have Your Prices, How Do You Find Clients Who Will Pay for Them?

Marketing, of course! If you take the time to market effectively and create your niche, you will draw in your ideal clients. Clients who understand what great design and customer service is worth and who are willing to pay more for the opportunity to work with the unique and talented you.

If you're wondering how the heck you're going to up your marketing game, great, you should be! Luckily, we'll talk all about marketing next.

How to Market Your Business & Drive Clients Right to You

Get the Clients and Price You Deserve

In this chapter I will help you do two important things–understand how and why you can charge more and how to attract clients who will happily pay more for the opportunity to work with you.

So why should you charge more? Maybe you're making a living wage and you don't want to drive away your clients by increasing your package prices.

The simple truth is, if you want to grow your business and increase your yearly income, you have to start charging what you're worth–which I can almost guarantee is more than you're charging right now.

When You Charge More, You:

1. Need fewer clients to hit your financial goals.

2. Are hired by people who value and appreciate the expertise you bring to their project.

3. Instead of feeling stressed and overworked, you will feel energized and inspired every single day.

So how do you start landing all the high-paying clients you can handle?

There's one very simple answer to this, a strategy straight out of the marketing textbook that millions of successful businesses have used to grow.

designfiles

Specialize

By simply narrowing the scope of your offerings, you can create a niche that will attract more enthusiastic and higher paying clients.

Choosing your Specialty
Before becoming household names, every coveted interior designer started out the same way: Scrappy and fighting to land even the cheapest of clients. So how did they turn the tide and actually start selling their services in a meaningful way?

They specialized.

Close your eyes for a moment and come up with a few words that quickly define what makes your business different from every other out there. What do you provide that someone else literally can't?

If you can't answer this, your potential clients can't either. Why should they hire you? Why should they knock down your door and fight for the chance to work with you?

Now picture your favorite interior designer. What are they known for? What is their brand identity? Every single successful interior designer is undoubtedly known for a specific style or specialty.

- **Emily Henderson**–It says right there on her website: "specializing in mixing eclectic styles on moderate budgets."

- **Maria Killam**–Known for color, color, color. Her passion in life is to transform the way you see color through her classic and timeless aesthetic.

- **Shea McGee**–A few semesters into design school and her specialty, a bright and clean aesthetic, had already attracted a wait-list of clients so long she had no idea how to handle the workload.

- **Joanna Gaines**–Known for her simple, fresh and timeless design preference. Her specialty is making old things new and preserving the character of a home.

Just by specializing, each of these business-savvy designers were able to stand out from the crowd and build a brand based on their unique value.

Let's use Joanna Gaines as an example:

Why Choosing a Specialty Is Essential to the Success of Your Business

CASE STUDY
Joanna Gaines

Known for her simple, fresh and timeless designs. Her specialty is making old things new and preserving and highlighting the character of the home.

Joanna is an extremely talented designer and I have no doubt that she can design any room for any client in any particular style, but she doesn't.

Every design project and every piece of branded content she puts out ties back to her specialty, and because of that, she's been able to build an image of herself as THE go-to-expert if you need a design that is fresh, timeless, and preserves the character of a home.

This is why Joanna will forever have a long list of clients knocking on her door. They aren't just clients who want advice on their living room decor, they want a Joanna Gaines design, they want HER expertise, her name and they're willing to pay more to get it.

Specialize and Clients Come to You

1. By specializing you are saying to potential clients: "I am an expert in this area and this is why you need me and not that other designer".

2. By specializing you make it possible for clients to search for and find you because you have the specific skill set they're looking for.

3. And because YOU ARE THE EXPERT in the field, people are willing to pay more to access that expertise.

So how do you figure out what to specialize in?

This is easy. All you have to figure out is what you truly love to design? When someone says, I want a space that looks just like the Taj Mahal, do you swoon? What about a french farmhouse family room, or a bright contemporary kitchen? Whether it's the style you're most passionate about, or even the problem you're most excited about solving–how to create storage in a minimalist interior, or how to make more earth conscious design choices– whatever gets your heart pumping or your curiosity peaked is what you should specialize in.

You can specialize in a number of areas including:

- Room types

- Interior styles (mid-century mod, industrial, coastal)

- Types of clients (new moms, young professionals, retirees)

- Types of projects (new construction, vacation homes, condos)

- Lifestyles (urban, simple living, zen)

- Mood and feel of a space (vibrant, dramatic, peaceful)

- Design problems (storage, functional kitchens, eco-conscious design etc)

Creating a niche that is defined by a combination of these factors will give your business a unique edge and make it easier for potential clients to be certain that you're the only person that can design for them.

For example, if you decide that your specialty is "residential design", YOU ARE SUNK. You'll just join the thousands of other designers out there who also offer residential design and you'll be lost in the crowd.

But if you specialize in "nurseries" and "kids rooms" for "new moms" who prefer a "simple lifestyle," what happens?

You'll have a smaller pool of clients, sure, but that ideal client also has a much smaller pool of designers to sort through. Even better, you now have a specific group to direct your marketing to.

You know the age, gender and lifestyle of your perfect client, and you can curtail your website and ad campaigns to seek them out, edging you past all those thousands of residential designers and into that sweet spot where clients can find and hire you without a lot of extra work.

Once you pick a niche you like, think about filling out a bio for your ideal customer. Big businesses do this all the time, they give her a name, an occupation, hobbies, pets, children, parents. What does she want in life? What is the problem that only you can solve for her? Try to write down everything you know about the person you most want to work with, and use those insights to market to them.

Client Worksheet:

Age: _____

Family status: _____

Occupation: _____

Income level: _____

Hobbies or Interests: _____

Really good at: _____

Really bad at: _____

Passionate about: _____

Weekend plans: _____

Problem you can solve: _____

_____

_____

_____

Check out the Table Below for a Variety of Areas That You Can Specialize In

This is by no means an exhaustive list but it should get the creative juices flowing. Remember to follow your passion, your curiosity, follow what sparks your creativity. This is going to be the foundation of your business image, something all of your marketing and deliverables will tie back to, so be sure you love it and you're not just choosing it because you think you'll get more clients if you do.

Styles

Mid-century Modern	Transitional	Asian	Victorian
Minimalist	Art Deco	Farmhouse	French Country
Scandinavian	Country	Mediterranean	Bohemian
Industrial	Coastal	Craftsman	Hollywood Glam
Contemporary	Shabby Chic	Rustic	
Urban	Eclectic	Tropical	
Traditional	Vintage	Southwestern	

Rooms

Living Room	Kids Bedroom	Mudroom	Library
Dining Room	Nursery	Laundry Room	Rental Property
Family Room	Kitchen	Home Office	Hotel Rooms
Master Bedroom	Bathroom	Front Porch	Restaurants
Guest bedroom	Powder Room	Man Cave	Patio
Teen Bedroom	Front Entry	She Shed	Sunroom

Mood/Feel

Tranquil	Feminine	Vibrant	Exotic
Cozy	Classy	Formal	Sophisticated
Calm	Opulent	Soulful	Peaceful
Global	Earthy	Unpretentious	Organic
Spacious	Intimate	Elegant	Quaint
Theatrical	Whimisical	Inviting	Warm
Grand	Bold	Trendy	Dramatic
Inspiring	Modest	Homey	
Masculine	Energetic	Liveable Lux	

Build

Detactched	Condo/Apt	New Construction	Commercial
Semi-Detactched	Tiny Homes	Guest House	Green Builds
Townhouse	Century Homes	Pool House	Cottages

Clients

New moms	Established Professionals (couple, no kids)
Young Families	Established Professionals (couple, with kids)
Young Professionals (male)	Families with teenage kids
Young Professionals (female)	Retirees
Young Professionals (couple, no kids)	Empty Nesters
Young Professionals (couple, with kids)	The affluent
Established Professionals (male)	Tech Savvy Millenials
Established Professionals (female)	

Lifestyle

The Provider	The Socialite	The Environmentalist	Urban Lifestyle
The Adventurer	The Activist	The Tradiationalist	Snow Birds
The Corporate	The Academic	Rural Lifestyle	Cultured
The Bohemian	The Technician	Simple Living	Traveller
The Creative	The Nature Lover	Zen Lifestyle	Techies

How to Make Potential Clients Like, Trust and Hire You

Now you have your niche, so how do you find that perfect client that you've envisioned? And more importantly, once you find them, how do you get them to pay you? Especially if you don't have a glowing list of testimonials, a massive presence online or a solid portfolio?

The answer: Focus less on the sale and more on creating relationships.

Your goal is to build a bond with your potential client. They need to know you are someone who understands them, the problems they face and that you, and you alone, will deliver the design and the experience that they expect.

When you can achieve this it won't matter how many testimonials or years of experience you have. They will hire you!

Getting people to KNOW, LIKE and TRUST you is the fastest and most reliable way to grow a loyal customer base. Okay, but Sheilah, you ask, this is hard enough to do in my real life, how do I get people to like and trust me online?

Don't stress. That's what this chapter is all about. And rest assured, you already have all the tools to make it happen.

Okay first and foremost, if you don't have a niche yet, you're going to have to finalize that before you do any of this. Make sure you can picture your ideal client, and fill out the ideal client worksheet in the previous section.

Remember, if you're trying to market to everyone, you're marketing to no one.

Got it? Good.

How to Make Potential Clients Know, Like and Hire You

1 **Have a seamless website**
By building a website that's beautiful and usable, you prove to clients that you're a legitimate entity who cares about their business appearance. Think of your home page as your store front, you should keep it clean and well branded so people know what kind of business you are without working too hard. The site should be easy to navigate and each page and blog post should direct potential clients to do exactly what you want them to–sign up for a consultation, buy a design package, or contact you for more information.

Recommended website platforms:
- Squarespace (https://www.squarespace.com/)
- Wix (https://www.wix.com/)
- Wordpress (https://wordpress.com/)

2 **Beautifully designed deliverables**
Because your designs have to be depicted digitally, it's imperative that you have clean and organized work that is properly branded and easy to understand. Just by including your logo in the corner of every page, you'll look like a professional business.

3 **Brilliant and personable copy**
Every blog post, blurb, and word on your site should be dripping with your personality. Clients are hiring you, and you want them to fall in love. Be personable, be fun, be honest, let them inside your world with a little bit of sincerity and rawness. This is not as easy as it looks for a business professional to let themselves bleed out onto their website, but if you're trying to get clients to know and like you, splendid copy is so so worth it.

4 **Professional communication**

Since you're primarily communicating with your clients via written word, professional communication is a must. Make sure your correspondence is free of typos, and easy to read. Also don't forget a professional email signature, maybe even one with a photo–it elevates your business and creates a personal connection at the same time.

5 **An about page that shows off your inner awesome**

This is another place where honesty and sincerity pay off. Think about this a little bit like online dating, if you show off the person you think they want to see you'll never catch the guy you really want. But if you show off the unique and wonderful you, tastefully edited of course, clients will fall in love. Be truthful, be amazing, and above all be you.

6 **Content that provides unique value to your potential client**

This is content that helps your potential clients solve a problem or reach a goal while positioning you as the expert in that area. It can be email blasts, blog posts, or even facebook or instagram posts. Your goal is just to be valuable, help people without ulterior motive, and share your expertise, so there is no need to sell or push your services. Each piece of Know, Like and Trust content you publish gives your ideal client confidence that you are the go-to-expert in that niche.

Know Like Trust Content is so important that I'm going to devote the rest of this section to teaching you how to create it.

All-In-One e-Design Software—Free Trial ⟩

design*files*

Create KNOW, LIKE and TRUST (KLT) Content

What should your KLT content be about?
Your KLT content should address the specific problems or pain points your niche audience is dealing with and provide a solution to overcome those problems and reach their desired outcome.

As an example let's say your niche is specializing in designing 'nurseries' for 'new moms' who love the 'simple-living' lifestyle.

Revisit your client worksheet. What does she worry about, what does she most want right now? These are easy answers. She worries about the safety of her baby, and she wants her life to be as simple as possible now that she's living the exhausting and overwhelmingly joyful life of a new mom.

So information that might be helpful to her is how to pick out nursery furnishings that are guaranteed safe and non-toxic. Maybe she wants to read about the safest brands of interior paint, or how to redesign a room into a nursery without throwing away a bunch of furniture, or making a huge impact on the environment.

All you have to do is get into her head a little. Keep asking yourselves those questions about her, what does she want when she wakes up. What does she worry about when she goes to sleep at night? What's her biggest annoyance right now and how can you solve it with your special super power?

Consider interviewing a mom friend to get some more ideas, or look at moms groups on reddit, or facebook to see what new moms are worried about, excited about, joyful about. Research your market and you will be able to reach your clients on an emotional level.

In this example your KLT content might include:

- ✓ The 5 safest household paints for your baby's nursery

- ✓ A 6-step guide to create a beautifully simple space for your new baby

- ✓ The Minimalist Baby–A practical guide for what you actually need

- ✓ 5 Simple ways to detox your baby's nursery

Note: these are actual guides that come up when you search for "simple-living nursery design" on pinterest. The designers that have created these guides know how to target their audience.

If you're worried that giving away free advice like this will lose you a potential client, DON'T BE.

Anyone who reads your content already fits within one of two categories:

1. The DIYer who had no intention of hiring you anyway (so no loss there).

2. Or the homeowner who doesn't have the time or patience to pull off a redesign on her own. No matter how much advice you give her, she will always default to hiring an expert, and savvy you, because of all that content, you just became her expert.

By giving useful content away for free you're building credibility and proving you understand the real problems your clients have and that you, more than anyone else, are capable of delivering the exact outcome they are looking for.

How to Structure Your KLT Content

1   **Consistency is key**

Stay focused on your niche consumer and don't stray. This means every single piece of content that's associated with your brand has the same look, the same types of advice, the same voice and personality. You won't win over the new mom if you have a listicle for thirteen king louie chairs that will look rad in your boho loft on your front page. Focus on your niche and stay consistent with your tone and appearance.

2   **Include a compelling headline**
Ex: The safest household paints for your baby's nursery

Why is this a compelling headline?

Because it immediately makes you think that some paints could be harmful to your new baby. Being the protective mother that you are, you'll want to make sure you are informed and taking the needed steps to avoid exposing your baby to unnecessary toxins.

To create a deliciously clickable headline there are a few failsafe choices:

- One headline formula that consistently works is:
  Numbers + Adjective + Target Keyword + Rationale + Promise
  Ex. 12 Easy Nursery Hacks that Make Life Easier For New Moms

- According to Bnonn at KissMetrics every headline should be:
  Specific
  Helpful
  Immediate
  Newsworthy
  Entertaining

Ex. Modern tips (Newsworthy) to help organize (Helpful) Nursery Toys (Specific) so you can spend more time enjoying (Entertainment) your kids today (Immediate).

- You can also use a headline generator to get your creativity cooking. Just remember these headlines almost always need tweaking, so use them for inspiration instead of pasting them at the top of your post.

3   **Content should be 500-700 words and easy to digest**
We don't want to read large blocks of copy, (isn't that right 64 page ebook reader?). In fact we won't. Studies show that our attention spans online are atrociously short, averaging about eight seconds before we shift to something else.

But the good news is if your content is compelling enough it can do wonders for your brand. If you can keep a reader's attention for a mere FIFTEEN seconds (which happens on less than half of all page clicks), we will be twenty five percent more likely to remember your brand. And if you keep our attention for three minutes, studies show that we will be twice as likely to return to your page.

Keep the copy short and compelling, and make sure to utilize graphics and white space (i.e. paragraph returns) to keep your content interesting to the eye. Splitting up your blog post into easy to consume segments is a helpful way to keep a reader's interest, and helps impart the information even when sixty percent of them just skim your words.

4 Learn how to write better

Modern readers are exhausted by boring copy, so you need to keep yours fresh and compelling.

Exude personality

Let readers into your life and give them a sneak peak at how you work and what you're working on. We all have a little voyeur in us, and we love seeing what other people's lives are really like. Give us a taste without being unprofessional.

Be honest and real

People can sense when you're putting on a front–that's disconcerting for us as humans and readers. Just be truthful about your life, mistakes you've made, honest needs for coffee. No one likes a busy body who's good at everything, and lets be honest, no one is that.

Vary your sentence structure and sentence beginnings

We all learn how to write sentences with a subject and a verb. I went, I shopped, I ate. Etc, but writing like that is boring to read. Consider starting a sentence with If or When or Just. These words can vary your sentence structure and make your blog post more interesting to read.

Write to a friend

Pretend that the only person who is going to read this blog post is your best friend. This act alone will make your work less stuffy and more personable. You don't need to heighten your language to seem smarter, or change your vocabulary, just be you and you'll find your unique voice.

Hire help if you need to

If you're planning on creating a lot of copy and you're not very confident in your writing (I mean you're an interior designer not a professional blogger, after all!) consider hiring a copywriter. Their job is to make you look good, and keep your brand consistent and compelling. There are a number of services that connect excellent copywriters with needy businesses. Upwork.com and freelancer.com are some of my favorites.

Mix up the medium

Look, if all you can do is write a blog post every once and a while, fine. But consider mixing it up and keeping your content fresh for your adoring fans. Remember, you're there to be helpful, and boring repetitive content isn't really that. Think about creating a how to video for painting windows, DIYs for reupholstering that vintage wingback, downloadable pdf guides for hanging curtains correctly, a top ten list for reasons you hate that mohair rug trend for a nursery (try to clean baby poop out of that, new moms!). If you picked a niche that you love, then the rest should be easy.

Once you start thinking about content ideas, you won't be able to stop. Keep a list on your phone for when inspiration strikes and don't forget to supply pics of content from your own life. This, by the way, is another way to get people to know like and trust you. If they can see your smiling trustworthy face doing the job you claim to do well, that just screams credibility.

You have to cast your net seven times before you catch a fish

Okay, I actually don't know if that's true about fish, but I do know it's true about clients.

It typically takes up to 7 times for a person to interact with you and your brand before they feel confident enough to buy from you.

With this in mind, try to create one piece of KLT content each week or two. Build this into your schedule and keep at it. Keep posting. And even if no one looks at it that day, you will have a whole backlog of articles you can repost later, and a whole library of content your future client will be able to peruse when they're vetting you.

So keep your content fresh, keep it relevant, and keep it updated. Make a posting schedule and try to stick to it. No one likes a blog that hasn't been updated for two years. Promise.

Just keep posting
Part of owning your own business is marketing your own business. They don't tell you that before you start, but it is an absolutely necessary part of your work. Build in a few hours of work every week to focus on marketing, and if you have to increase your package prices to do this, just meander on back to the pricing section and make it happen.

KLT content is how you spread word about wonderful, talented you. There is really no other way to gain clients and build your business.

Remember: Focus on what you love, share it with the world and the clients and money will literally fall into your lap.

How to Triple Your Profits With Affiliate Links

As a business owner, you always want to be on the lookout for opportunities to make more money.

One of the easiest ways to double or even triple your profits as an e-Designer is to use affiliate links so you can earn a commission on the sale of every product your client buys. You're the one doing all the research and pointing your client to the perfect couch, or headboard at the perfect price. The company pretty much owes you a cut, right?

If you are not familiar with affiliate links here's how they work:

1. There are a number of affiliate networks available online (cj, shareasale, viglinks, pepperjam, rakuten marketing).

2. You can apply to these affiliate networks at no cost to you.

3. Each network partners with a variety of retailers and each retailer has a unique program that you can join.

4. When you join a retail program they will provide you with trackable links for each of their products.

5. All you have to do is copy the trackable affiliate link for the product you're recommending and include it in the shopping list you send to your client.

6. If your client clicks that link to purchase the item, you earn a commission for the sale.

7. It's that easy. Seriously.

So, Who Should You Work With?

There are so many affiliate link programs out there, it can be overwhelming. So to help you get started, I put together a list of 40 of the highest paying and most popular affiliate programs and where you can find them.

1-800Lighting	Viglinks	8%
2 Modern	Viglinks	8%
AllModern	CJ	7%
Anthropologie	Viglinks	4%
Bellacor	Viglinks	6%
Belle & June	Viglinks	7%
BirchLane	CJ	7%
Burke Decor	Shareasale	8%
CB2	CJ	3%
Cost Plus World Market	CJ	2-4%
Crate and Barrel	CJ	3%
Design Within Reach	Viglinks	5%
Designer Living	Viglinks	12%
Dot and Bo	Viglinks	5%
E-Carpet Gallery	Shareasale	7%
Furbish Studio	Shareasale	7%
Graham and Brown	Viglinks	10%
Great Big Canvas	Viglinks	10%
Hayneedle	CJ	10-13%
John Robshaw	Shareasale	12%

designfiles

Jonathan Adler	Viglinks	6%
Joss & Main	CJ	7%
Lulu & Georgia	Viglinks	10%
Lumen Light and Living	Viglinks	10%
Mark and Graham	Viglinks	3%
Modshop	Shareasale	7%
One Kings Lane	Viglinks	20% new customer - 5%/sale
Perigold	CJ	3%
Pier 1	Viglinks	7%
Pottery Barn Kids	Viglinks	3%
Rachel Ashwell Shabby Chic Couture	Shareasale	10%
Rejuvenation	Viglinks	8%
The land of Nod	Viglinks	7%
Villeroy & Boch	Viglinks	3% - 5% - 7%
Wayfair	CJ	7%
West Elm	Viglinks	3%
William Sonoma	Viglinks	3%
Y Lighting	Viglinks	8%

As you can see, when you use these programs you're going to average a 7% or 8% commission. There are programs that offer a higher commission rate, for instance, Hayneedle will give you about 10% to 13% on the sale of a product. And on the flip side, some household name vendors offer a much lower commission rate, like CB2, Crate & Barrel and West Elm.

Depending on the scope and style of your project, you will likely want to pick products from a variety of stores to ensure you average a standard 7% to 8% commission on each job.

So, How Much Money Does 7% Turn Into?

Let's say that you're working on your $500 package, and over the course of the project you end up recommending $12,000 of furnishings for their space. Not unreasonable, right?

Now, if you add an affiliate link to each of the products you recommend and average a commision rate of 7%, you could earn an extra $840 on this project. Nearly tripling your earnings for the same amount of effort.

Tell me another way to make $1,340.00 on a single project without raising your rates!?

This is why affiliate links are a no-brainer. And because every major retailer uses them you don't have to sacrifice the quality of your designs to make more money. It just takes a little extra clicking around to grab the link.

Annex Credenza

$1,750

🛒 Shop It

🚚 Free Shipping
from: ↘ **Stylegarage.com**

Material / Finish: Wood Veneer
Dimensions: W72" X D18" X H24"
SKU:

Description:
This functional 4-door storage unit has adjustable shelves and a stainless steel base with micro-adjustable level feet. It features integrated, recessed handles for a clean, minimal aesthetic. Part of the Annex Storage Series, the Credenza matches perfectly with the Annex Cabinet, Media Stand and End Table.

• 4 self-closing doors with beveled pulls

5 Things to Consider About Affiliate Programs

Not all affiliate programs are created equal, so be sure to do your due diligence and ask yourself a few questions before signing up.

1. **Do you know and trust the vendor?**
   This is critical! There will always be affiliate programs that pay a high commission rate, but if that vendor doesn't deliver a quality product, or provides terrible customer service, it will reflect badly on you and your business. In other words–Choose Wisely.

2. **Does your client know and trust the vendor?**
   If your client already loves and regularly shops from a certain online retailer, it doesn't hurt to recommend products from that brand. Your goal is to get your client to purchase every item you propose, so if it fits your design, recommending products from their favorite shop will dramatically increase the likelihood that the product will be purchased.

3. **Does the vendor provide excellent customer service?**
   I know I touched on this above but it bears repeating. Many larger online vendors have upped the ante when it comes to outstanding customer service (free shipping, easy returns, product tracking, white glove delivery service, etc). By working with vendors like this you can ensure that your client has a fantastic experience even if there's an issue with ordering, or delivery, or they need to for some reason return a product. You don't want to risk losing return clients because of poor customer service from a third party.

designfiles

4 **Commission rate vs. product price**

There are affiliate programs where you're only going to earn a small commission. If you and/or your client trust that vendor, then you might want to consider using them anyway. In some cases, you might find that you're still earning a generous commission on the sale of that product because it comes from a higher end brand.

5 **Don't just accept the standard rate–get more!**

When you first join an affiliate program you'll get the standard commission rate from the company. But, if over time you generate a lot of sales for a particular vendor, you can contact the retailer's affiliate rep and ask for a higher commission rate. If they see that you're bringing them a substantial amount of business, they'll likely increase your rate to make sure you keep hawking their products.

If there is one thing you get out of this e-book, I want it to be this. Never be afraid to ask for more.

All-In-One e-Design Software—Free Trial ›

design*files*

Must Have Tools
to Run a Profitable
e-Design Business

Now that you know why you should build an e-Design business and how to land clients and price packages, let's talk a little bit about the day to day.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this book, I have dedicated the last ten years of my life to creating some of the interior design industry's most innovative design tools, and providing them to e-Designers everywhere.

In this chapter I will show you some of those powerful tools. Not just because they were built by my team, but because they have been tried, tested and proven by thousands of designers to cut their workload in half and increase their profits.

Whatever program you choose to use, there are five key tools that you definitely need in order to optimize your process so you can work less and make more money. I.e. live the dream.

Those five must-have tools are:

1. A design questionnaire

2. A browser clipper (for sourcing products)

3. A design board software

4. A shopping list builder

5. A centralized communication hub

The beauty of having all these tools in one program is that they can work together and automate many of the tasks that would normally cost you hours of precious time.

By trying to master multiple programs and redoing work that could be automated, your business will struggle to grow. Instead of focusing your energy on landing clients and doing the work, your time will be used up on the mechanics of the business not the business itself.

Make sense? Great. I can't wait to tell you about these tools. They will make your life so much easier!

Tool #1: Your Design Questionnaire

Every successful e-Design project starts by asking your client to fill out a well crafted design questionnaire. This questionnaire should feel light, fun, and easy for your clients to complete as well as provide you with all the essential details you need to begin the project.

Your questionnaire will be one of the first ways your client will interact with your business, so it's important that it reflects the level of professionalism and ease you want to impart throughout the entire process.

If you plan to build your own design questionnaire, here are a few key factors you should consider:

- It should be branded to your business and look professionally designed

- Don't bombard your client with a million super detailed questions. Find the happy medium where you get the info you need to move the project along.

- Include clickable preset answers so your client can get through quickly instead of manually typing out each answer.

- Include stylish icons and images to make it feel fun and enticing

- Build in convenience by making it mobile friendly

- Allow clients to bypass a question if they don't have those details available at that moment. You don't want them to get 90% there and then have to abandon ship and redo the entire questionnaire at a later date.

- Never limit your client to selecting one option when multiple might apply to them.
  Ex: if you ask your client to choose their preferred style from a list of styles, they might feel they are a combination of minimal, mid century modern and industrial. If you only allow them to select one, you're not getting the full picture which will affect the designs you create.
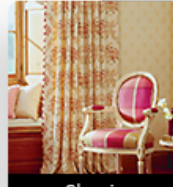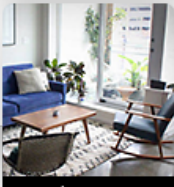
If you're not really sure how to build a beautiful questionnaire with all the right questions DesignFiles provides a pre-built questionnaire that you can customize to fit your needs. It's professionally designed, mobile friendly, and is specially formatted for e-Design projects.

[Click this link to view the DesignFiles questionnaire](#).

Using your questionnaire as a marketing tool

You can link to your personalized questionnaire from your website, blog, or social media channel and allow potential clients to fill it out and request a design consultation. That's easy, hassle-free marketing that helps you get more client leads.

With a well crafted questionnaire you'll be able to automate the on-boarding process for your clients, collect all the information you need for each job and market your business to a massive online audience.

Tool #2: Your Browser Clipper

Do you source products the old fashioned way?

- You find an image of a product online or snap a picture of a product at a store

- You save that image to your computer

- Then upload that image into the program you use to create design boards

- Then you open another program and manually add in every little product detail and retail link for your client's shopping list

If this sounds like your current process, I promise you can easily cut your workload in half (like today) with this handy little tool. Once you try it, you'll wonder how you ever managed without it.

A browser clipper lets you go to any vendor's website and instantly save all product images and details to your DesignFiles account. From there, you can immediately add products to any design board, product list, quote, invoice, purchase order or tearsheet with a couple of clicks.

With this tool, you'll quickly build up a database of your favorite products that you can use for any myriad of future projects, without ever having to spend another second gathering the details or trying to remember where you saved the picture.
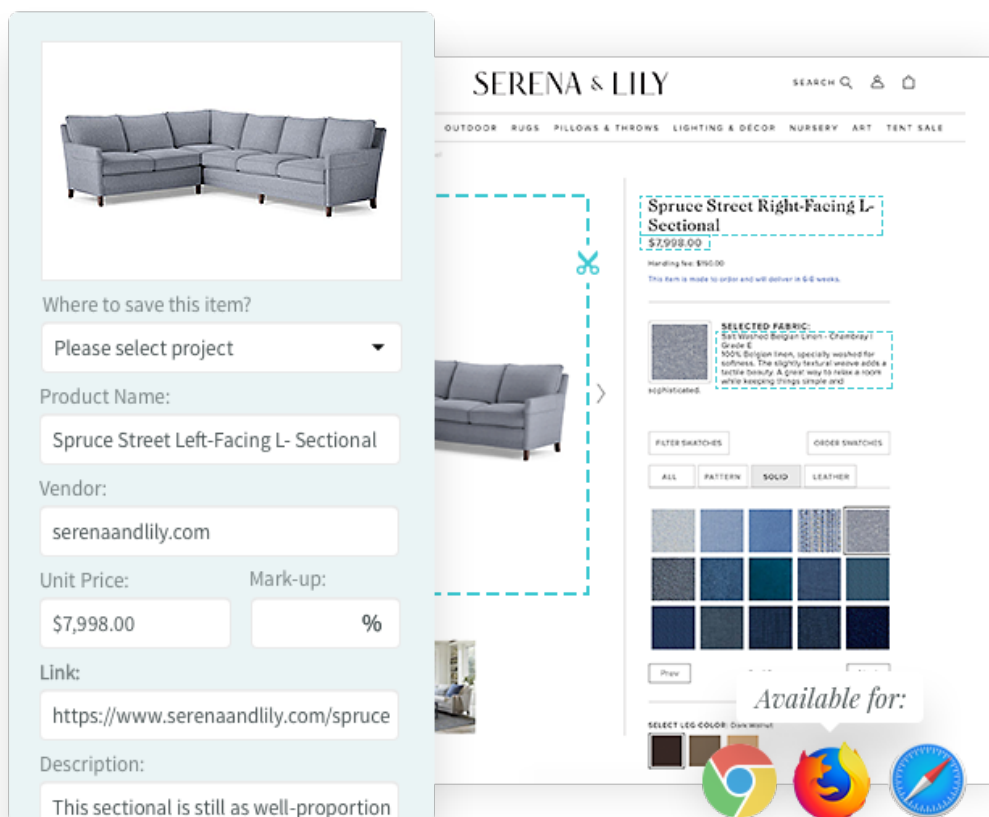
Tool #3: Design Board Software
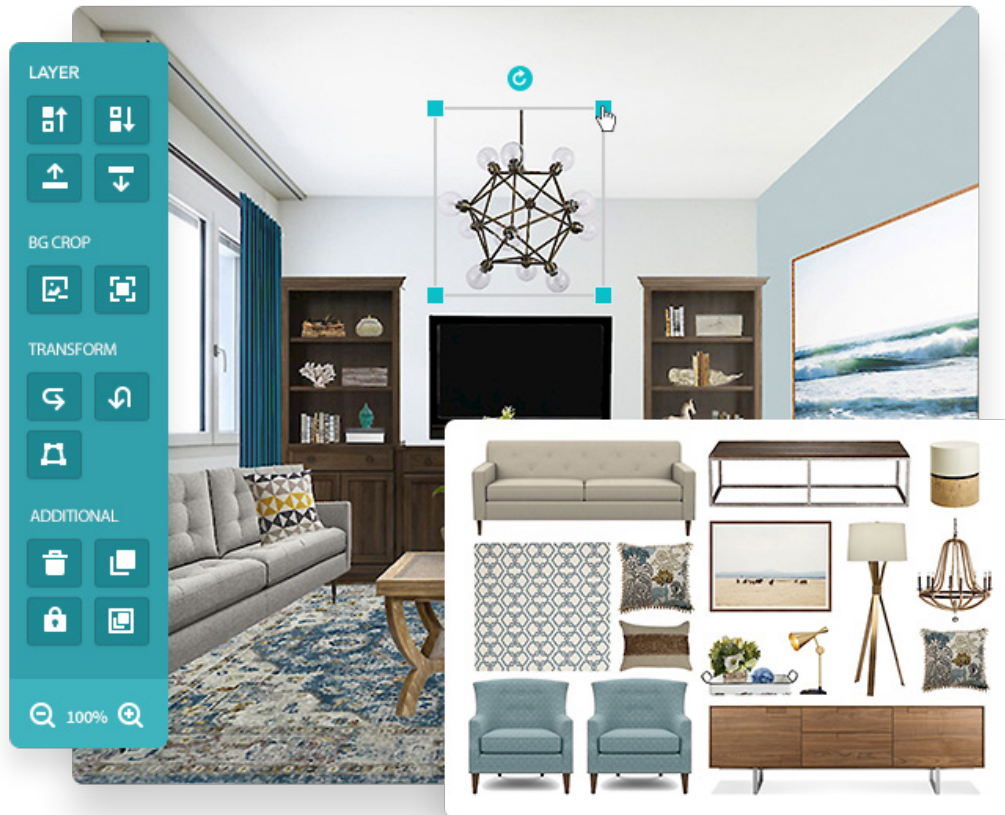
Design boards are an incredibly powerful visualization tool that will help you sell your vision to your client. Some designers lean toward the collage-like mood board, whereas others lean toward more complex 3d room models. What you rely on to demonstrate your design all comes down to what you're good at, what's included in your package, and how much time you have to finalize your deliverables.

Most e-Designers tend to gravitate to moodboard software over 3D rendering programs for three important reasons:

1 **Speed**

Mood boards like the one below are fast and simple to create. This one took 15 minutes to build in DesignFiles. By including a simple floor plan in your presentation your client will be able to quickly visualize how these items will be arranged within their space.

ALLEGHENY Living Room with Fireplace

ELLADESIGNS

2 **Ability to upload your own images**

3D rendering programs limit you to using the preset product library they provide. Moodboard software, on the other hand, allows you to add any item you like so you and your client can both feel confident that what they see is what they get.

3 2D + 3D in one

Moodboard software is so versatile, you can hint at a 3D design without switching programs. By layering actual product images you can create a 3D (or pseudo 3D) room design like the one below. You can even upload images of your client's space and use it as a backdrop for your moodboard designs. It looks really professional and takes no time at all.


Condo Living - Dining Space

What makes DesignFiles stand out from other design software tools is the host of additional features built in to streamline your entire design process, including:

- Over 750K products from well respected vendors including Wayfair, Joss and Main, Birch Lane, All Modern, Crate and Barrel, CB2 and many more.

- A full paint library including Benjamin Moore, Sherwin Williams and Dulux

- A whole host of editing tools to help you crop, scale, flip, and layer products in place to create clean, professional looking designs without having to learn a complicated and bloated program like photoshop.

- A text tool to add notes, titles and more to your designs.

- A budget calculator to keep you on track as you're designing.

Watch the video to see how you can create a design board like the one below in under 20 minutes.
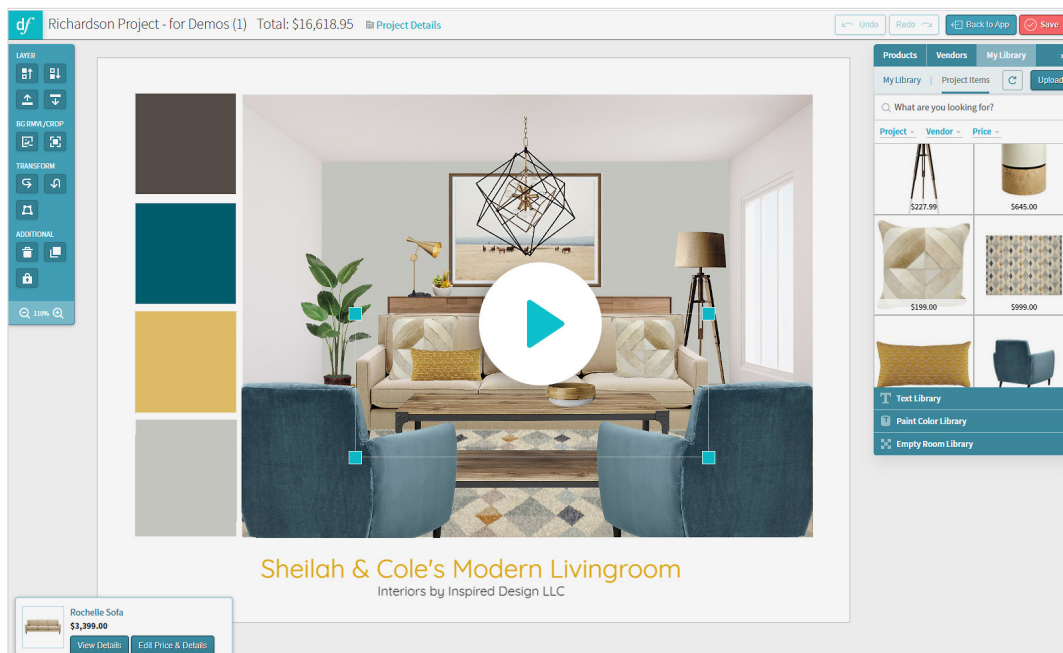
Tool #4: Your Easy-To-Use Shopping List

Your shopping list is where you'll provide your client with an exact breakdown of what they need to purchase to make their dream room a reality.

As with all your deliverables, this should be professionally designed, well organized and quick and easy to navigate.

designfiles

Your shopping list should include:
- Images of the products you are recommending
- A link to the website to purchase the item
- The price of each item
- Quantity needed
- Product specific details (fabric, finish, size, etc)

When done right your client should be absolutely confident about what they need to purchase to create your design.

Fun Fact: Did you know that providing large images of a product in multiple views can increase conversion rate by 65%? It's true! That's why our shopping list includes large images of each product and gives you the ability to add multiple product images for each item.
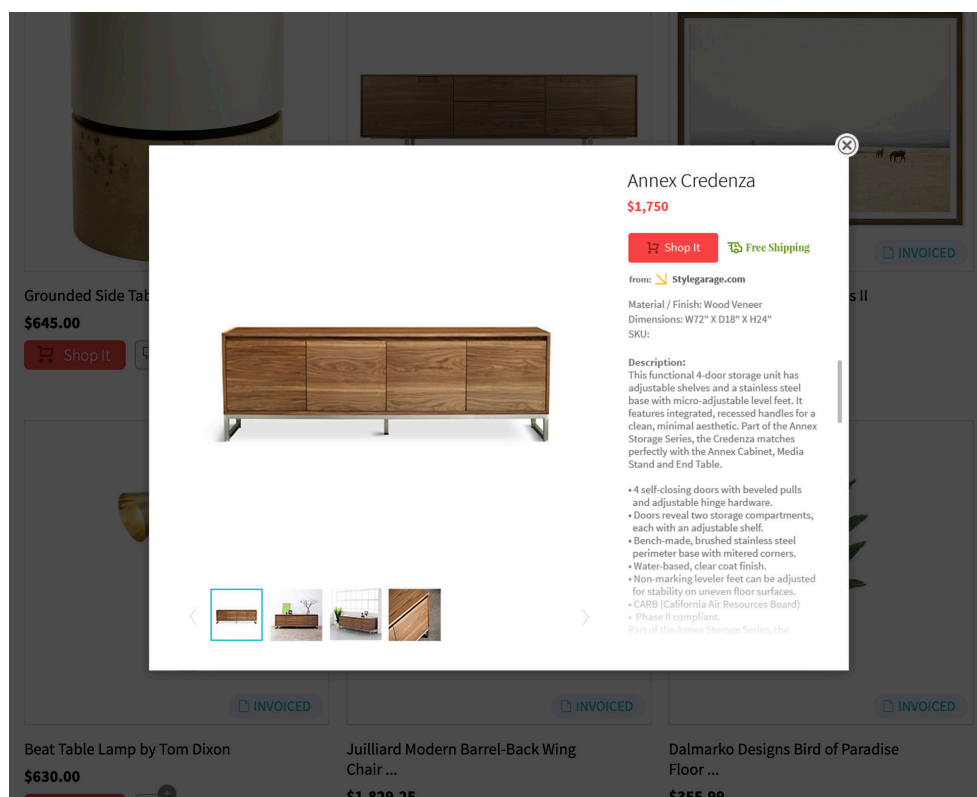
To help you maximize time and profits, DesignFiles automatically generates these shopping lists for you the second you save a design board. Think about that. You will not have to spend a single second pulling all that detailed information together.

All that's left to do now is invite your client into your professionally branded online platform so they can review your designs, leave feedback and, when they're ready, shop the look.

P.S. Remember, add your affiliate links–don't leave money on the table.

Edit Product Details

Product Link:

Place product URL with affiliate link here.

Tool #5: Streamlined Communication Tools

Every interior designer has had at least one client who calls at all hours because they have questions or ideas about their project. No matter how helpful or available you want to be, it can be extremely frustrating and time consuming fielding these calls.

By having one centralized location for all communication you can create clear work-life boundaries for yourself and your clients, as well as an easy information catch all so you aren't stuck searching emails, texts and voicemail messages trying to figure out where you last left off with the client.

The easiest and most reliable way to stay on top of all client communication is to have communication tools built directly into your project management software.
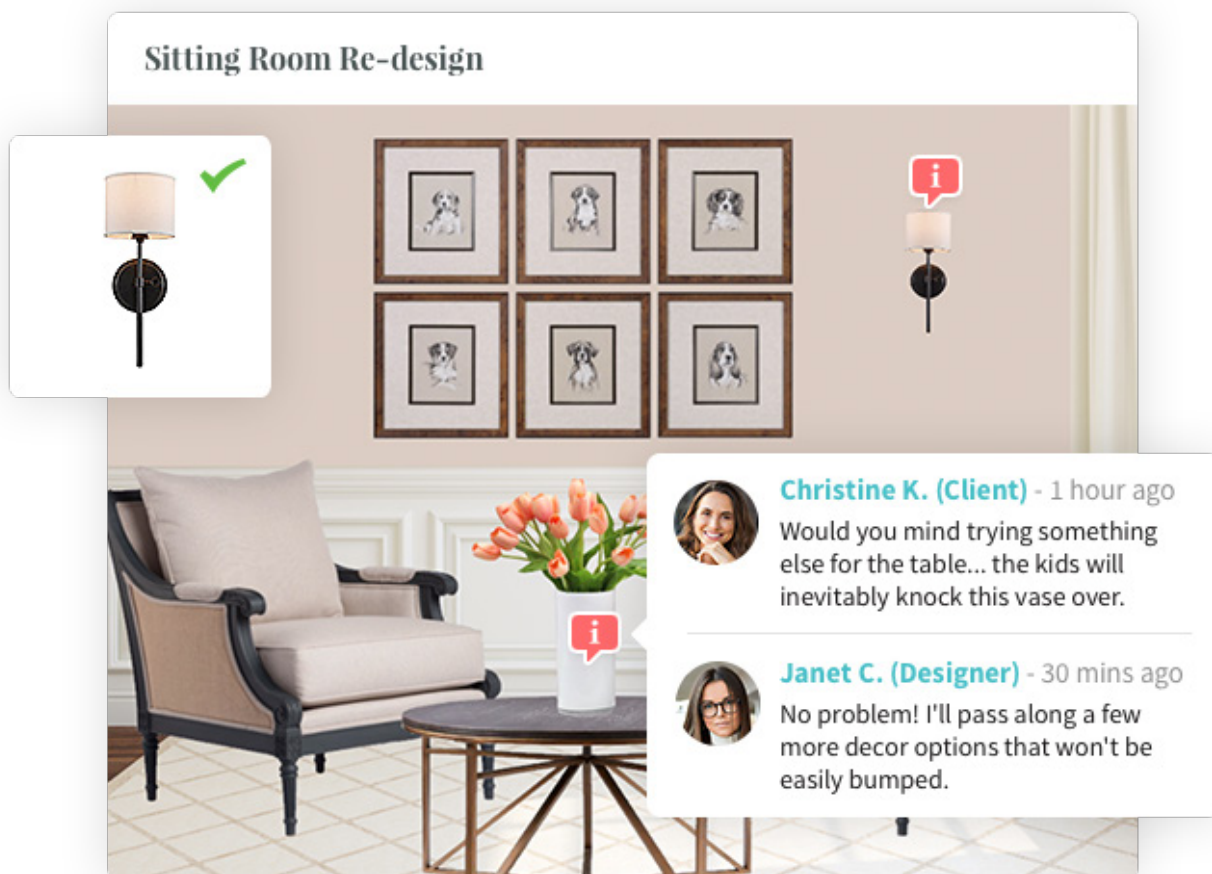
This not only provides your client with an easy and convenient method to connect with you (on your terms) but all that communication is now saved directly to your project which means you can access it anytime, anywhere.

And to help keep you on track and attentive to your client's needs, DesignFiles will automatically send you email notifications anytime your client leaves a comment.

Alright, You've Made It!

You've completed your first crash course on building your successful e-Design business. Now it's time to get out there, land some clients, and get e-designing.

It can take years to learn all the ins and outs of growing an e-Design business on your own, so feel free to use this book as a resource any time along the way to help you market, specify or work smarter. With it you'll get a massive head start, by-pass the trial and error stage and start turning a profit in no time.

If you are interested in learning more about the DesignFiles tools that have helped thousands of designers build more productive and profitable design businesses, just [click here](). I'm 100% confident they will do the same for you.

If I could give you one piece of advice at this moment, something I needed to hear while I was in the fledgling stages of my own business it's this: Businesses grow. It takes time but if you keep working, it will keep growing. To start a new venture is to commit an act of bravery. It takes so much courage to jump into the deep end and learn how to swim. Our friends and family may not always see it that way, but it's true.

You can do it. Just keep moving and you'll stay afloat. Promise.

So go out there, win some clients and design your heart out. If you ever need someone to talk to or bounce ideas off of, just reach out. I'm here to help in any way I can, and remember, you've got this!

—

Sheilah

Interested in Trying out the Tools That Have Helped Thousands of Designers Build More Productive and Profitable Businesses?

I'm 100% confident they'll do the same for you. To help get you up and running even faster, I'm including a limited time promo code to access all these tools at **63% off for three whole months**. That's more than enough time to start using them and see the amazing results.

For less than you make in one hour of work a month, these integrated tools will save you up to four hours every single day!

🔗 Try DesignFiles and Get **63% Off for Three Months**

To make it **100% risk free** for you, I'm also throwing in a **full 60 day money back guarantee**.

*design*files

Check out Some of Our Member Testimonials

★★★★★

DesignFiles cuts my time in half! I *used to have to do all this by hand. Using DesignFiles gives my business the professionalism and quality we need to give our clients what they want. LOVE IT!*

– Carolyn T.

★★★★★

The more I use it the more I love it. The tools are extremely valuable to me. ***I was just able to close a $10,000 custom bedding and window treatments project due to the visuals I could give the client****.*

– Robin J.

★★★★★

A GAME CHANGER–This is going to save me hundreds of hours of running around. *This software is every designers dream.* ***I will be able to double my projects with half the work. AMAZING!*** *I was able to design 1 room in 1 day. It was so fun to do and shop without going out in 100 degree weather!*

–DesignFiles Designer

★★★★★

DesignFiles allows me to do what I do best: DESIGN. *It has* ***relieved me of so many tasks that used to literally swallow my days****. It is truly all-encompassing: design and mood board creation, a communication platform for me and my clients, budgeting, invoicing and so much more.* ***Not only do I love it, but many of my clients sing DesignFiles' praises also****.*

– Clare R.