

Ep #192: A Different Kind of Millionaire



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 192.

Welcome to the *Design You* podcast. A show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth and joy, here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey, friends, we are rolling into the last month of this year, so exciting. And yes, for most of us that means holiday season. But what it also means for us business owners is wrapping up a calendar year and taking a look at what business looked like over the last 11 or 12 months and getting to thinking about what we want it to look like next year in the new year. So my team and I have been doing some really exciting things with our company this year. And notice that I said our company because I'm going to tell you more about that in just a bit.

But this episode is what I'm calling a different kind of millionaire, or maybe you want to just call it a different kind of business. But I'm going to talk to you about how to really think differently about your company because that's exactly what we've been doing.

Okay, so what have we done? Well, for one thing we've hit a higher profit margin than in any year in the last 10 years. And I didn't say higher revenues but I did say higher profits which is our goal. Because as you may know, you can have impressive revenues but with profit margins that are super dismal you could be working your buns off and struggling to make ends meet especially if your revenues are high. High revenue, low profit is not a good place to be, which is where a lot of us find ourselves as creative business owners.

We've also completely reorganized our team and have really grown our team. We've never had a team like this. And you've heard from my team recently. But the work on our team actually started in 2020. And we've done a lot of the team hiring this year. So we've added two new full-time coaches. We've added my assistant which I've never had a true executive assistant before. And we made our virtual assistant, Nicole, who was our

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just operations guru but was a contract team member, we made her a full-time team member which was all very exciting.

So that's four new team members this year. And we'll be hiring some more coaches and maybe some other positions in the new year. We've also worked incredibly hard on our company culture over the last year. If you listened to my last few episodes you heard my episode on values and then you heard the amazing episode where I interviewed my team which was so much fun. And that episode, hopefully gave you some insight and exciting look at what it looks like in our company, and the ways we're thriving as a team.

You all, I'm not kidding, I have never ever, ever had a team or a company like this. And I can honestly say I have hit my dream business for the first time in 22 years of owning a company, almost 23. This is it. It was very intentional. And today's episode I'm going to talk to you about what some of that looked like.

Now, in just a few weeks we're rolling out an all new website, it'll be in the new year, a new branding. And what's so exciting about this is it truly reflects our company, and our values, and this work that we've been doing. And it is so clear, and so direct, and so spot on, and it's really a reflection of the work we are meant to do as a team in the world. I cannot wait for you to see the site and the photos. Some of you saw the sneak peeks of our photoshoot earlier this fall.

And I can't wait for you to read the copy, the way we're talking about our clients, and our team, and our work. It is so different but it is very authentic. It's very bold. It's provocative. It will definitely repel some people, all the people it's supposed to repel. But it's going to attract our ideal client better than ever before. And as we're saying internally as we describe it, we say it's a bit salty and a bit sweet because we're not everyone's cup of tea. And so you'll see some of that branding on a webinar I'm doing soon which I'll talk about later, but it is so that.

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It's a little sassy, it's definitely straightforward which you're used to hearing from me. But it's bolder and more direct, and it is amazing. Now, the reason we can articulate who we are with this much clarity and confidence is because we have never been more clear about our vision for the company, our mission for the impact we want to create in the world. And we have an incredible group of women as our team that are making this work happen. And we believe in each other and we're all playing a real part in this work.

It's no longer boss and employees, it is truly a team, that's why I say it's our company, not just my company. And as you'll read on the new website when it launches, we describe ourselves as a women run company specializing in helping women and a few really progressive thinking dudes in the interior design industry become millionaires in a sustainable and conscious way. We also say on the website that we chase joy and health as passionately as we pursue wealth.

And we want to help you design a life and a business that makes you feel as boss as Beyonce while designing a better world in the process. So amazing. So why am I telling you all this stuff? Well, it's because I have built, or let's say we've built, I did not do this on my own, it's because we've built a different kind of business. And we've become a different kind of millionaire business, seven figure business, one that is very different from the business I had just a few years ago. And I want you to know how to build a different kind of business too.

So first let me tell you why and how it's different. Let's talk about this sort of like a before and after, what it was like before and what it's like now. I'm going to try to paint a picture for you of those things and help you understand how we've changed, and the growth we've created which has been such a fulfilling process. But it's making such a difference not only to us as a team but to our clients too.

Okay, so what's the difference? Well, before, before we got really intentional about our values and about building this kind of company, I definitely had a hustle culture company. And you might hear me talk about I

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when I'm talking about the before, and we when I'm talking about the now because that would be very true. So originally, I had built a hustle culture, bootstrapping, always on the treadmill. We've got to work really hard, it was not very fun. There were some exciting things that happened but it was hard and not really pleasant. It was kind of the path to burnout more than once.

It is nothing like what we have now, which we call pro rest, sustainable, conscious, human focused, that's the approach we have now. We have our people as human first and then team members second. And we absolutely live by that in every way. And you'll hear more about that in a minute. So we went from hustle culture to anti hustle, pro rest. Amazing shift. Also originally the old company for a long time, for many, many years was really run by very much a hierarchy, I'm the boss, you're my employees. Not at all like what we have now.

I mean, yes, at some level I'm definitely still the boss. So now I'm not saying that there's no hierarchy at all but we don't think about the company that way. We have a true team, there are people doing amazing things. There's so much happening in the company that I don't even really know. I know the over kind of 40,000 foot view level what people are doing.

But if you all ask me a question about specific parts and departments, I wouldn't know because the people in those departments are doing such amazing things and really elevating in the company, that I'd have to go ask them to say, "Hey, how are we doing this thing? Where is it? What's happening?" And that's exactly how I want it to be because I've gotten out of the way, hired the right people. And we have a whole team of people really elevating and executing in our company.

The next thing that changed is I always thought in the past that I was supposed to follow all the gurus, all the gurus, all the CEOs, all of those people that would tell me what to do in business. And when you take a look at that list it was mostly white men or the women, the white women that had been trained by the white men. And this list of people that I was advising

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with and following included everybody from my dad who's an entrepreneur, also to people like Tony Robbins, or Brendon Burchard, or insert white CEO or coach, whoever you can think of.

And definitely the approach they were teaching was all about money, making more money, the most money, the most profit. It was definitely a power based process, could be called capitalism 101. And I'm not anti-capitalism but I'll tell you about that in a minute because I definitely think capitalism needs to be reformed. But it was very much the gurus that I was trusting. And yeah, we still learn from people and yeah, we still read books and yeah, we still look at content out in the world.

But we have shifted tremendously to a trusting ourselves, believing we know and can discern what to do. And it's not always constant self-improvement like it was in the past, as if something is broken about us that constantly needs to be fixed. Yeah, we're always growing. We love to grow. We love to learn but there's also a lot of things that we just know we do really well now and we trust that we know how to do it, big difference.

And when you work with me, if you ever do, or some of you who do, you hear me a lot of times now say it, and I'll say it in a little bit. I'm not your guru either. I want you to be your own guru, and that's what we really learned, was to be our own guru, our own north star which was a really big shift.

Related to that I also used to believe that there was one right way to do business. And I was always looking for it, that's why I was always reading, and studying, and trying harder, and doing all the things that 'they' told me to. And to be perfectly honest, a lot of times none of those things felt generous, or loving, or very feminine. They always felt forced.

And it caused a lot of tension and stress, even just in my physical body because I was trying to force my way, be the masculine version of me, and stay in that side of my personality all the time. And it would have me doing things like thinking, it's not personal, it's just business, whether that was

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dealing with a team member, or letting somebody go, or whatever the situation was. How many times have you heard someone say, “It’s not personal, it’s just business.” But spoiler alert, humans are persons, so all relationships are personal.

And there was something about that there’s only one right way to do it and you need to find the right way, and let’s find the people who are making the most money because their way must be the right way. And what I really learned is there are a million ways to do business. And we can look at all the gurus and we can see all their ways, and we can take the parts that resonate with us, we can leave all the rest, or we can take none of it if we need to.

And we can really lean into our intuition, especially as women. We really aren’t taught to trust ourselves in business. We’re taught to trust ourselves as moms, or as sisters, or homemakers, but we’re not taught to trust ourselves in business. And I think that’s a mistake that we’re making. And we’re forcing ourselves into another model that really doesn’t serve us.

And so I learned that it’s absolutely personal when you have relationships in business, whether it’s customers or team members, it’s 100% personal. And relationships matter and people matter. And money is not more important than people. And there’s not one right way to do things. There is a million right ways. And so we have to find the way that’s right for us. And I feel like we’ve really, really done that and it feels so good.

Okay, so also in the old version of me and my business I was keeping a lot of authentic things about me quiet. The reason was not to offend or repel customers if I’m being perfectly honest. And I often thought, a lot of my – especially when I was doing a lot more interior design work. I do a little bit of that now, not as much, I do more consulting.

But when I was really doing mostly high end design, I was thinking often to myself, my clients mostly here in Arkansas probably don’t have the same values as me in a lot of ways. They probably don’t have the same politics

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as me. They probably don't have the same values about social justice, or the climate, or capitalism as me. And I kept a lot of stuff quiet. But the interesting thing is I wasn't quiet at all in the background, at home and with my family, and my brother, and my husband, and my child, and my parents, and when I was yelling at the television.

I absolutely knew what my values are but I didn't share them. I had a personal me and a business me. And I didn't mix in my social or anywhere else, I didn't mix in my thoughts about human rights, or social justice, or politics, or the climate, or capitalism, or religion, or feminism, or anything else that could be polarizing and controversial. In my day-to-day those were the things I was thinking about, and talking about, and studying. But I wasn't bringing it to my business.

Now, I would push the envelope. I've always been known to be a straight talker and I would push the envelope but mostly in business. I felt most comfortable pushing and innovating in business. But even that, I would freak people out sometimes. I have had people tell me that I was fearmongering or that I'd terrified them about the future of business because I was talking really straightforward. But that was so authentic to me.

And it's interesting the difference in how I'm showing up now and really kind of following my path. Because I've been in politics, you all, since I was six. I'm not kidding. My dad ran for and became a state representative in Arkansas when I was six. He was a state rep for two terms here in Little Rock when Bill Clinton was governor. And I campaigned, and I loved it, and I rode in parades, and waved, and asked everybody to vote for my dad. And I was indoctrinated into politics literally at six years old.

And then I grew up around politics. I interned in Washington DC on Capitol Hill for my congressmen when I was in college. And then I worked in Clinton's campaign for president here in Arkansas. I worked in the finance office of his presidency, of his campaign, headquarters in Little Rock when he ran. So exciting. And then I did some volunteer work and some

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fundraising for Hilary when she ran in 2016. So all of this is my life and it has been part of who I am.

My mom and my grandmother were what's called Arkansas travelers and traveled for Clinton all over the country, campaigning for his presidential election. I've worked in other smaller campaigns, yet I never spoke about politics on my blogs or my social media because the patriarchal and cultural model for a business says don't do it. Don't talk about politics, or religion, or even really money especially as a woman because you might offend someone. And if you offend people in business that means less money for you.

And the old way for me, it's still the current way for many, but the old way for me of doing business was money first, profit first, money first, money before people. And that was not really authentic for me. So I finally chose authenticity over profit. And it's liberating. And it's repelled some people. And it's attracted a whole lot of people but it fully aligns with my values, and the company's values, and the team's values. And it sets us up to be honest about the work we're doing in the world.

So on that note, similarly about profits, it really was all about profits before as I've said. The interesting thing is I was chasing profit, chasing money, chasing the almighty dollar as they say, but it seemed like the money was always at arm's length. I was doing everything 'right', the way the gurus, and the advisors, and the CEOs, and entrepreneurs told me to do it. But why was I always not really making money, not at the level, compared to the amount of hard work I was putting in?

So that's the thing about business strategy. Every time I turned around, I was supposed to be making more. First, I made six figures, and then I made multiple six figures, and then I made seven figures. And now I hear everyone talking about eight figures and I even have fallen into that trap of okay, now I guess I have to go for eight figures. But I want us to look at, where is that coming from? And that doesn't necessarily mean that just

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because the path looks like that, and that's how culture defines success, that I am supposed to be, or need to be drawn up to that next level.

I can absolutely choose to stay where I am or I can choose to grow. But I have to make that decision along with my team, with what's right for us. And we definitely weren't doing that in the old version of my company. I was just pushing, pushing, pushing, trying to force to the next level and it was absolutely exhausting.

So let me say, I mentioned this a little bit earlier, I'm not completely anti-capitalism. I'm not socialist, although there are a lot of socialism programs and things already in government on both sides of the political aisle, things that we benefit from and we use and I get that. I'm not promoting or campaigning for a socialist society. But I think there are a lot of problems with capitalism. And I think one of the main problems just culturally is that we consistently do put profit before people.

So I think our current capitalism model definitely needs an overhaul in a lot of ways. But I do love making money and I love to help other people make money. And the idea that no matter how much money we're making, it's never enough is problematic but that's what a lot of us think. And we think we should want more, and more, and more but that is exhausting. Not all of us want or need to make eight figures, or even seven figures, or even multiple six figures and possibly not even six figures.

I mean it's not, trust me, money is amazing and money can make life a whole lot easier, we know that but it's not everything. And I think that there's such a pull, a push really, for us all to believe we have to constantly be making more money and that's a shift that we've really looked at. Yes, we're still a seven figure company. Yes, we're even going to grow but now we know why, because we know exactly what we want to spend the money on. We're very dialed in and committed to the impact and the difference we want to make in the world.

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And we're not just making more money for money's sake, we're making it for a certain reason. So I want you all to know that I absolutely believe and I've done this work with my team for our company now that everybody needs to decide intentionally what number is right for you and your company. And not let culture and that message constantly tell us. I mean if we look around at the online marketing, and I've even been guilty of this myself, it's constantly make six and seven figures. Now, you'll hear that in some of my programs because we will help you do that.

But the shift here is we only want to help you do it if that's what you want, not because you think you should. And that's exactly how we're running our company now too. But chasing that dollar was what had us putting profit before people in our company. And that's where we don't live anymore. We are 100% people first now. And ironically, it's interesting, now that I'm more authentic and more honest than ever, and our team and our company culture is our top priority and we put our people first. Our profits are actually higher than ever, go figure.

Had I shifted years ago what would my dollar amounts looked like had I stopped chasing the dollar and really focused on our impact, what would have happened sooner? I think the very thing we're seeing right now. So it's really fascinating.

Okay, so what else? Over the last few years as I built more of an online business, one of the things that really happened, and I won't act like it just happened to me, I chose it, I did it, was I fell into the same trap. In the same way I was listening to those entrepreneurs, the white dudes, my dad, the people that did it the old way, the capitalist based way, where it wasn't aligned with me, and my core self, and my core values really.

The same kind of thing happened in the online business, so I was following a lot of the online business sales practices, mostly created by white dudes or white women who learned from the white dudes. And this is the kind of marketing that you might have heard now called bro marketing, or those people are called bro marketers, not when I first started following them.

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That's what they've become called in the last year or so, when the design business is not super in the online space, it's moving more into this.

And I hope because of what I've learned I can help some of us avoid some of this bro marketing tactic sort of approach. But I definitely fell into it and believed they were the ones who knew all the secrets, and all the steps, and all the tactics for this new kind of business. And some of it really worked. And some of it felt equally icky, just as some of the other stuff, that it's not business, it's personal. Or there's a lot of other stuff that felt icky in this online space.

So it's probably not a surprise that it was pretty much more of the same from those original entrepreneurs and CEOs that I learned from back in my brick and mortar business and then the new ones I learned from in my online business. But what I now know is so many of those practices are patriarchal, they're not equitable, so they're not equity centered, or justice centered. And a lot of them are just not super honest and straightforward. In fact a lot of those practices are pretty shady and pretty slimy.

And thankfully I haven't been in the online space that long, just really about three or four years. So I didn't create too many of those bad habits like I did probably in the original part of my business. But we definitely have made some of those choices and some of those mistakes. And we've been now working our way out of some of those practices that we did take on because they felt really out of alignment with our values.

So we've spent this year correcting and changing a lot of our wording, and our launch strategies. And we're going to continue to do that. We're going to continue to engineer out and clean up some of our language and our launch strategies so that they become more and more straightforward, and what I would call honest. It's not necessarily that we were lying, but I'll tell you more about that in a second. But for me I like the word 'honest', it's one of my core values in our company, core values to be honest and direct, so I like to be straightforward and honest.

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And we definitely want to be equity centered which means it is equitable across different categories and communities of people, depending on your identity. If you're a marginalized identity, if you're a white person, a person of color, LGBTQIA, indigenous folks, Asian folks and Pacific Islanders, Asian Americans, all the different genders. We want to be equitable across all of the different identities and categories of people that we potentially will work with, with our business practices.

So in the past I used a lot of language in my marketing that was driven by promises that if you just use my system, you too could have the level of success as me. And the interesting thing about that, and I didn't even really know it at the time, I definitely know it now. But that marketing does not consider any of my privilege.

It really should have said, if you are a white affluent designer with a spouse that helps you pay the bills, and access to money because of your dad, or your contacts, or other people that you know. And you have a lot of support, and you can afford business coaches and all the things, if you have all of that then you absolutely can have my business results too.

But if you are marginalized by our society in any way, if you're not affluent, if you're not white, if you're not straight, not cisgender etc. Then there's more to the story of what you're going to need to do or to gain access to, to be successful at the same level as me and a lot of other people that you see thriving in business. So that's kind of the results not typical conversation.

And I wasn't really saying that because to be perfectly honest, before I really started studying diversity, and equity, and inclusion, and now I'm becoming certified as an equity centered leader and coach. I just didn't really know how wrong I was getting all of this. But we definitely used and it's probably still in some of our language out there now that we're still cleaning up a lot of the bro marketing tactics like fake urgency, fake scarcity.

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You know the ones where we say, “There is only a few spots available”, as if we wouldn’t take your money if you were willing to buy because it’s a digital course. There’s not a limit to how many people can get that delivered to their inbox or a webinar. There’s really not a limit to the number of people that can meet in a virtual room. Or hurry before doors closed, and yeah, we’re still going to close our launches now, some. And we may say, “If you want in this time get in now because we’re going to close for a little bit.”

But what we won’t say is, “We never know if we’re opening again. And this could be the last time.” And any of those really arm twisty, sort of slimy, little shady things that we see and have done. And I’m sure you’ve seen it all in the online business, that just don’t feel like honest and true. So we’re working those out of our language, out of our system and we feel so much better about it.

The thing about that fake urgency and scarcity is I never felt good about those to begin with. I always felt like I was lying. So a lot of times I didn’t even push them. And if people came back after we were closed, I was always like, “Sure, you can still get in.” But every time I was saying that “Okay, you can’t get in after tomorrow”, I really felt like I was lying. So I feel so happy now to be more straightforward about how our programs work, and who we’re looking to work with, and helping you figure out if the timing or the price is right for you.

I have never been one of those coaches or salespeople whose asked our customers to take out a loan or run up their credit cards. I definitely don’t want you doing that. Making an investment, stretching yourself a little bit, that’s fine, I’ve stretched myself. I mean it’s fine for me, it may not be fine for you, you have to decide that. But I’m not one of those companies, there are plenty of companies doing really shady things, about asking you to leverage – I don’t know – your house, a second mortgage, really get into debt. And that’s all about money and not about people.

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And we're really about people. We've truly always been about people when it comes to our programs, and it's why those tactics never felt right. But we really want to work with people who want what we're selling, who want, depending on the program we sell, to hit six figures or multiple six figures.

Or if you want to be in our Millionaire Mentorship, you want to build a business that would support seven figures, not that we guarantee you'll make seven figures or not that you even have to. But we teach you how to build a business that could have you running like clockwork if you grow to seven figures. But if you're not there yet, or it's too expensive for you, or you truly can't afford it, or the timing's right for you, we absolutely will never try to talk to you into it. We want you to have agency around. And we always wanted that.

And so now that's why we're making sure that we aren't using harmful tactics, or words, or things. And if you see those, point them out because we're trying to make sure we clean them up. And it's so interesting because we work with Facebook Ads people and our marketing person. And I'm not blaming anybody, I take full responsibility. But it's interesting how the people in the online business space are so indoctrinated into that way of working that it's almost – it's like, I don't know, second nature. It's like the vernacular or the language of online business.

And sometimes I even see stuff slipping by and I'll read one of our emails and I'm like, "Wait, why are we saying there's only x number of spots? That's not true." And we have to clean that up. So if you see it, please point it out. We are working to really eradicate that from the way we do business.

And by the way, let me just stop here for a minute and say, if our sales practices over the last few years, or the words we used, or any way of working with us was harmful or oppressive to you, please accept our apology, my apology. We now know better. We will do better. And for those that I'm teaching in the online space, I will definitely be teaching this more equitable, more human first approach. So we are unlearning.

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And yeah, we may still get some – well, let me just say, we will, we will get some stuff wrong in the future, whether it's our business practices, whether it's our diversity, equity and inclusion work, whether it's – I don't know, something else that I don't even know is a blind spot right now. We'll definitely get some stuff wrong. But we're committed to honesty, and equity, and justice in our sales, our marketing, our business practices and we're committed to growth as a team.

So for the online business and online marketing I will say that kind of practice like I said is sadly the norm. But luckily, I'm seeing a lot more people doing it right. And I'm listening to some incredible people, some incredible podcasts. I'll be sharing a lot of those with you in the next few weeks and months that are really having a voice in this space for how to do business differently. And I am so grateful to be learning from them. And I'm definitely here to pass those people and that information along to you in some future episodes about online marketing and some other things.

But we are currently working to get all our stuff updated. We're actually updating things in our programs in all of 2022 because there's some content in our programs right now that would reflect the old way. And we're really moving into this new equity centered practice. So everyone that learns with us can learn this way of doing business also.

Okay, so what else? Well, a couple more things that we changed. Next, I was creating a place accidentally in my business with my team and in my communities. And I'm kind of embarrassed to say it really because I did it for way too long and I didn't notice and I should have known. And I should have already done this work. Heck, I've been in politics and on the liberal side and exposed to all kinds of diversity and other people. Why did I not notice that my business looked exactly like me?

Or what's actually more true is it wasn't even looking exactly like me, it was looking like the façade of me that I was projecting back when I wasn't even talking about any of this stuff I really cared about on my social media or in real life. So I built a business and a team that in a lot of ways looked like

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the façade version, the palatable, acceptable version of me I had put out in the world, which was white affluent straight, cisgender. Somebody who wouldn't stir the pot on anything but maybe pushed the business envelope a little bit.

But 100% stayed quiet on other important issues that could be polarizing. And because I was showing up in that way I was attracting others who resonated with that version of me. And that is not at all, I'm happy to say, what we look like anymore. And we're doing the work to make sure that our communities don't look like that either. So if you follow me now, if you work with me, if you join our team, not only will you get all of me and the very real me which looks and feels so good. You will get a very diverse group of people, of team members.

We're diversifying our communities. We're offering scholarship to some other marginalized groups to encourage more people to get into our communities. Because it's really boring and not that much fun to just have a space where everybody looks, and acts, and thinks just like you. So that's something really exciting.

Another thing that I used to do, the old me was I had my worth and my worthiness completely wrapped up in my achievements and goals which makes perfect sense. If I was all about money all the time and making more money, and achieving, and growing, and checking the next box, and getting on the next rung of the ladder of course I was proving my worth with those achievements. That's not what we look like these days.

We're doing the coolest stuff ever, every single day in my company, when I'm on meetings with my team and they're reporting back to me other things that are happening, that my team members are doing in the company. I literally every day say, "Oh my gosh, I love us. We are so cool. We are so amazing. We are a bunch of badass human beings. We are making an impact." And it feels so freaking good because my team and I are all worthy 100% whether we achieve anything, and we know it.

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And that allows us to separate our work from us which is more fun because then our work, although it is aligned with us and our values, we can be creative. We can try things. We can try and fail at things because we don't make it mean anything about us because we're like, "We are cool and worthy just because we showed up because we're badass people." But this work is exciting, and exhilarating, and impactful, and forward thinking, and progressive, and making a difference.

And we can have fun with it knowing, we'll try a bunch of stuff that doesn't work, we'll try some things that really do. But at the end of the day if we're aligning with our values and we're enjoying the work, and that we're in it together, and we're having a good time, that's all that really matters. And it doesn't mean we are less worthy no matter what the outcomes of our work are. Super exciting.

Also one of the last things, maybe the last or next to the last thing was the old me had my finger in all the pies, all of them. I was making all the decisions. Everything was going through me. I didn't really let people, what I would call rise and shine, and develop, and take leadership roles in the company. I was afraid to. I was afraid to let go because the entrepreneurial, patriarchal, cultural map that I was being directed by said, "No, you should be a control freak and you should handle everything, and watch everything, and micromanage everything."

So I was truly afraid that if I didn't control everything, that we would fail. But guess what? Control is an absolute illusion. There is no control, the pandemic showed us that, a lot of other things showed us that. We think we're in control. We're not in control. We're never really in control. We don't control the universe even when we think we do. And hanging on so tight and wearing every hat just holds you back.

Sort of in a related issue I was taught in the examples I was looking at, even the women examples, like the Martha Stewart's of the world, or the Oprah's of the world. The way it looked from the outside is that it was really all about them. Now, we all knew they weren't doing everything, there's no

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way they were doing everything. But it was sort of really supposed to look like they were.

How many of us have laughed that Martha didn't get up and gather all the eggs, and make all the cakes, and butcher the chickens and everything, the turkey, before thanksgiving dinner all by herself? But that's definitely the way it was presented. And it was a personal brand with Martha, or Oprah, or other people at the helm. And you really didn't hear about anything else. So I was indoctrinated into that way of thinking.

And it was really how I ran my company. I was involved in everything which often meant I was the bottleneck to most everything, it slowed everything down and it was problematic. But also the way we talked about us as a company to the world was really always about me. You didn't hear about my team. My team wasn't on the website as they're about to be when we launch. They weren't on podcasts. I wasn't giving them all credit. I might have been personally, I wasn't one to take credit all the time, I like to thank people.

But at the end of the day, yeah, I publicly was taking credit because we had me on everything. And that has completely changed. We really think of it now, instead of selling the personal brand or me the person, that we're selling the process, the process for Design You, the process for Millionaire Mentorship, the process of running a design business. And I'm still the spokesperson, the head spokesperson but all of those amazing people are a big part of this as well.

And so there are definitely things that we do as a company now, like I said earlier, that I don't even know about and it feels incredible. And people will ask me sometimes on a coaching call, "Hey, tell me about this thing that you all launched earlier. The critiques were going to do on Design You." And I'm like, "You know what? I'm going to have to let one of the other coaches answer that because they're the ones that developed that program and they're going to be running that inside the community."

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Yeah, I'm still in there every week coaching you. It's not that I'm not involved. It's not that I'm handing things off to people. I'm highly involved in my program but we all know where our zone of genius is and we stay in our lane. And it is so cool. And we give lots of credit publicly, and on social media, on our soon to be website, on our soon to be updated sales pages, about our team and the other people that help us make all of this happen. It feels so good.

And you all, I don't do any of this alone and I never did it alone. But my team is now so incredible, the most incredible they've ever been and I don't want to do it alone. I'm having so much fun. I'm like, "If you all quit, I'm quitting." We're in this together now. Who knew, when I used to try to carry the weight of everything on my shoulders it was way too much. And now it's so much fun to do this collectively and have connection with these other people that I don't ever want to do any of this again by myself at all.

And I guess the last thing really that we've really changed and well, I'm sure there is more things, but it's the last thing for now and for this episode. And I'm going to go into a few other details for you. But the last thing I can think of in the old version was that I really bought into the typical, and very capitalistic, and very patriarchal business practices that have been around for years that had me saying things and thinking things about my team like, why are you asking to be off work? We have so much work to do.

No, you can't have more than two weeks' vacation. How could we afford that? We're a small business. And why are you always asking for raises and bonuses? We're a small business. I mean regardless of the fact that I was underpaying people back then, why would you want to actually have more money? I mean you want to have a living wage, that's not how we run businesses. And it's not funny at all but I laugh because it's absurd for me to think about that.

And I was always thinking, no, you can't make decisions on your own, you have to run that through me. And of course we can't pay benefits. And again, we're a small company. And we were also saying things like,

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“Customers are always first and you need to take care of them no matter what. And I’m sorry you have personal things you need to get to. I really need you to work this late night or weekend to get our work done because we have a commitment.”

And some of you may be nodding your heads and saying, “Yeah, that’s how I run my company now.” But here’s what I want to tell you. I’m pretty embarrassed that that’s how I ran my company for a long time. And if you’ve been saying and thinking those same things, trust me, there is a whole other way to run your business that really works, that has me saying yes to three and four weeks’ vacation. And sure we can talk about raises and bonuses. And yes, we can talk about benefits.

And of course I want you to start taking on more responsibility, and making decisions, and running entire departments, and no, the customers aren’t first. The team is first because if we don’t take care of the team who the heck is going to take care of the customers? And we have truly shifted. So I say all of this to say that I basically broke up over the last one to two years or so with the entire male dominated, patriarchal, white supremacist, American dream, bootstrapping rulebook for running a business, the one that comes from scarcity mindset.

There’s only enough success for some people, the people who looked like me, white, affluent, multiple degrees, all the things, I took that rulebook and that way of doing business and we burned it all down. And we started rebuilding everything and I mean everything. We rebuilt our team, and our marketing, and our brand, and our values, and our philosophy, and our programs, and our client list, and our policies and procedures, and social media, all of it, the whole rulebook, we threw it out. We rewrote the whole damn thing. We’re still rewriting parts of it.

And here’s what I want you to know, you can build a business on your own terms, on your values, one that feels so good to you and your team, one that is equity centered, one that is honest and direct, one that is transparent, one that calls BS on things like the hustle culture and slimy

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marketing tactics. And you no longer have to kill yourself or your team to create success. In fact you get to decide what success even looks like. You get to completely rewrite what success looks like for you.

And let me tell you, success isn't just about money, and being a millionaire isn't just about money. When you look up 'millionaire' in the dictionary it says, when your assets are worth a million dollars. And there's a lot of other assets, programs, people, intellectual property, things in your business worth a million dollars. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to have a million dollars in the bank. You can if you want to but don't let culture tell you what you have to do. Our success now puts people before profits.

You can totally build a company where you aren't the only one who benefits. The old model promised you and me, the bosses, the financial and time freedom. But that model only teaches you how to get to the top, building your success on the backs of other people. If it's not built on you, it's built on someone else in that model. And you might get free, time freedom, financial freedom but your team doesn't. You're just transferring the hustle down to everybody else. That's not conscious or sustainable because if you break your people, you break your business.

And trust me, if I want freedom, my people want freedom. They don't want to see me off working six hours a week while they're working 60. That's not freedom for anybody. That's not consciousness. That's not people before profits. And so I wanted a conscious and sustainable business, one that doesn't break me or my people. And I was just really, really tired of all the old tropes in business and all the old tactics that just didn't work. I don't know if they ever worked but they didn't work anymore and they weren't working for me, and they weren't right for me or aligned with me.

I was tired of the idea that the CEO makes loads of money, which by the way I hadn't even hit really loads of money. But the team was barely able to earn a living wage in that model. I mean how many of us hear about corporate CEOs making 800 times what their team members are making?

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That doesn't make any sense to me. And so it was never really the CEOs that had the big problem in that model. Yeah, we had a lot of responsibility and a lot of us were taught to overwork because culture says to, that's how we get our accolades and validation is work ourselves to death.

But at the end of the day most CEOs weren't starving like a lot of our team members who weren't making a living wage. But with justice as a personal core value of our company and as me personally, I mean I'm an Enneagram 8, you all. And I don't know if you know what that means, if you are one you do. But justice is assigned to us eights at birth, it's just part of who we are. So that unjust model that the old model was just never felt right to me. I knew it wasn't right. I was always stressed and angry and it felt so forced and I knew it just didn't feel good.

But what I have now really feels good. So how did I make the shift and when did I make it? Well, those are great questions. I've had a seven figure business, which in case you don't know what that means, I'm sure you do but just in case you don't, that means a million dollars or more per year, typically it means in revenues. Now, the definition I gave you a minute ago said a millionaire could be in assets. And I absolutely welcome that version now.

But when I talked about seven figures, and when most people are it means seven figures in revenue, so a one with a bunch of zeros, what is it? Six zeros, so that's seven total figures for a million dollars or multimillion dollars. So I've been making that for a long time. I think I hit one million dollars in about year three or four of my design business. Not a conscious sustainable business, a miserable business but I was making a million dollars. And I went on to have a million dollars or make a million dollars in my consulting business too.

So I've built two seven-figure businesses, neither of which felt sustainable, good, comfortable. They were all built on those 11 things I talked about earlier. And it sounded so sexy though, seven figures, million dollars, so sexy, so successful, so impressive, and to a lot of people, so intimidating.

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But what it really was most of the time in that old way of doing business was so exhausting, and so stressful, and so much to try to keep up with year after year, with me as the chief employee wearing all the hats. And my take home pay was not a whole lot compared to how much I was working.

I mean for a lot of years, I make over six figures personally now but for a lot of years I was making 40,000, and then 70,000, and one point got up to 90, but dang, I was killing myself for that money when the company was bringing in more than seven figures. At one point, one year we brought in 2.8 or 2.6, almost three million dollars and I really wasn't making that much money and I was absolutely burned out and exhausted. It was so broken. What I have now is a combined business.

So all the consulting stuff, the little bit of design work I still do, we rolled it all into one sustainable, healthy, values based business that does still make over seven figures, close to multiple, so close to the two million dollar range. And we're headed in that direction but it's more profitable than it's ever been and it's not just about the money anymore.

We decide as a company and as a team how much money we want to make together because we get to decide then with that money, how much impact we can make in the world, where we can spend it, who we can hire, what we can contribute to. And as I've told you before on other podcasts, or on some of my sales pages, only 2% of women owned businesses ever make a million dollars. But what I want you to think about is not the typical cultural you should be making a million dollars, but I want you to decide how much revenue is right for you.

If a 100K is enough then make a 100K, that's perfect. If multiple six figures, so 300, 400, 500, 700, if that would fit your needs for you company, your own salary, for the things you want to do in the world. Amazing. But if you want to make more, if you want to make a bigger impact with money and you can really think about what you could do with that money to impact the world, and your family, and your team, and your community. Then I want you to really think about the why. Why would I want to be a millionaire?

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And remember, I believe that money is not the end game. Money is a tool to create change. I used to think the money was the end game and the money always seemed at arm's length for me. Now money is a tool and we create the money to use it in the world and it's amazing. So think about it. What if your company consistently did sustainably hit seven figures and sustainably I mean by not killing you or your team members, not breaking anyone's back? What would you be able to do with that money that you can't do now?

Let's even back up a minute. What if you allowed yourself to believe that you could create a seven figure personal salary for yourself over the next three to five years. That's a whole other level of income. It's kind of hard to get my head around when I think about it. I don't make a million dollars a year. It feels kind of uncomfortable. Can you even wrap your head around what that would feel like? It's hard to even imagine a million dollars in salary.

But I think that's because in the past when we dreamed of that or when I dreamed of that I would have been the CEO making that much money but it would have been in that old model so it would have been at the expense of my team. I would have been making tons, my team barely getting by. And that didn't feel right.

Now on the model we have if I created with my team enough money for me to be making that much money, there's going to be a whole lot of other incredible women and people on my team that work alongside me, making six figures, multiple six figures themselves, maybe even more. Really cool to think about. So what kind of positive change, and I'm not saying we all need a million dollar salary but I want you to go there in your head because it lets you think about what you could do with that money.

What kind of positive change could that level of financial strength bring to you, your business, your family, your life, to your team members, to their families, to their life, what would it do? Again, I'm not saying we all need a million dollars. And we certainly don't need a million dollar salary for that

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kind of life but I just want you to let your mind go there for a second either with your business, thinking way bigger, or even your personal salary.

And when we think of money as a tool, as a resource, when we think about what it can do in the world, it can do so much good, that's when we're moved to show up in a different way. And it's not all about the money, it's about what can be done with the money. And that's where you can still put people first. We as a company are starting to make some significant charitable contributions and we love it. It feels so good. And I know that in our not too distant future we're going to be contributing way more.

We're going to hopefully hit six figures and giving to the causes that we love in the next two to three years. And this kind of contribution completely aligns with our company values and my personal values. But it's so fun for the team, it lights me up not just to get to give myself but for the team to feel the pride, and the joy, and the impact that we're making together. Because I don't make that money, the revenues by myself, we all play a role so we all should get the benefit and the fulfilment of making a difference in the world.

And think of the mental energy when we don't have money, the mental energy and the financial gymnastics that you have to do. Think maybe about your last large scale purchase or donation personally that you did, or for your company. When you want to make a big purchase but you just are afraid to or you don't really have the money, it's really frustrating to not be able to show up the way you want to.

I always tell my accountant, "I don't like you to tell me no. How much revenue would it take for you to not tell me and the team no to the things that we want, whether it be our own benefits as team members, or contributions, or to create new programs? How much money would it take?" And really think about that, or maybe you've wished you could do more for others if you had more money. And that's what we want for you as women, we make a big difference in the world, our hearts, our minds, our intuition, we really do a lot for the world.

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And the world is a better place when women have more money. And if you had that much money, could you optimize your talents and other people's talents? Could you attain more opportunities to help more people and achieve greater impact without burning out or selling out? The answer I think is absolutely yes. We believe that for those of you who want to be and I mean I don't even want to say, are meant to be, but maybe.

But if you want to be, if it's your choice to build this size and level of business, not because you're supposed to, because you're moved to, then absolutely. I think that for the right people we are fully capable of making a lot of money and making a big impact in the world. Now, building this kind of business isn't easy, mainly because it's going against the grain, it goes against all those 11 things and a whole lot more that I told you, culture and systems tell us not to do. And it still does take a lot of hard work.

I'm not saying we don't work hard. We definitely work hard, we just don't work nights and weekends anymore. But when we are working, we're working very hard and intentionally, and we're designing the business and a life that aligns with our values. And you absolutely can do that too. So if you think you're ready for this and you want our help then we absolutely want to help you and would love to guide you through this process.

But listen, remember, I am not your guru. We are not your gurus. I am not your guru. That's the old way of putting some businesspeople on a pedestal and believing there's one way to do things. I think now that's a lie. There's so many ways. But what we will do is we will walk alongside you on this journey. We will share what we have learned.

We will teach you a lot of options for frameworks and best practices that you can choose from to craft and mold the exact business that's right for you, built on your unique values so that you can show up as your most authentic self. And create a team and a culture that helps you make a real difference in the world. It is so exciting, so exciting. Okay, amazing.

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Well, if you think you want our help to build this kind of business and you might not be ready yet, we'll be here. We'll be here when you're ready. But if you're ready now or you want to know more, stay tuned because in the next week we're going to open our doors to our year long Millionaire Mentorship program. And again, this doesn't guarantee you're going to make a million dollars. But what we will do is help you set up a business that can support and sustain a million dollars in growth, in revenues, big profits, a team, that's what we help you build, something that's sustainable.

So this is not our program for people who are just getting started in business. For those of you that still need to shore up your foundation and get a lot of things still set up in your business, even if you've been in business a long time, if some of the things aren't quite working right or you're not hitting some of those six figures revenues ish, in that range, you've got to go through that first before you leap all the way up to seven, if you ever do. And again, like I said, you get to decide but for that level of business our Design You program's going to be more suited for you.

But if you've already hit six or multiple six figures, or even if you've hit seven figures like I did but just like me it's taking a toll on you, it's not sustainable. And you feel like you're just on that treadmill all the time that culture puts us on, it's so easy to step on and you want to do things a different way, you want to shake shit up as we call it, in your business. Then we'll be giving you all of the details of how our Millionaire Mentorship program works in a really fun masterclass that I'm teaching on December 9th called Millionaire Mixology: The Recipe for a Better Design Business.

So I hope you'll join me for that. Come on over and listen to it if you want to, even if you're a better fit for Design You, or if you're not going to do any of our programs yet, you're going to just listen and do it on your own, and listen to the free stuff on our podcast, that's okay too. But feel free to come over to the masterclass, you might learn some really exciting things. You might get inspired, learn more about how I'm really doing things differently and my team is really doing things differently.

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So to get all the details and get the Zoom link and all that jazz, you're going to want to register, so go to tobifairley.com/masterclass and that'll get you all those details and I will see you in that fun, fun, we're going to have a good time, in that masterclass called Millionaire Mixology: The Recipe for a Better Design Business. Okay, that's what I have for you friends. Thanks for hanging with me with this episode. I know it was a lot to take in. This is serious work. And these are the most rewarding shifts I've ever made in my life and my business.

I mean I've been talking for an hour and I'm still so excited to tell you this. That's the sort of fulfilment that this is giving me and my team, is the impact that we're able to create and you absolutely can have that too. So if you want it and you want our help, we are here for you, we can't wait to hear from you soon. But I'll see you no matter what back here next week for another great episode of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

Thank you so much for listening to the *Design You* podcast, and if you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model, there has never been a more important time than right now. So, join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my *Design You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at TobiFairley.com.