

Ep #371: Interior Designers, Relationships and Referrals



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Stacey Brown Randall

Stacey Brown Randall: Hey there, and welcome to the Roadmap to Referrals podcast, a show that proves you can generate referrals without asking or manipulation.

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I'm your host, Stacey Brown Randall. I'm a card-carrying member of the Business Failure Club, have taught my referrals without asking methodology and strategy to clients in more than 14 countries around the world. And my mission is to help you unleash a referral explosion by leveraging the science of referrals and respecting your relationships.

Did you miss our announcement a few weeks ago about our in-person two-day workshop where we go from creation to execution on your referral strategy? It's called the Referral Accelerator.

We opened registration for our final 2025 Accelerator, which will be held in September in Charlotte. If there's still any seats available, you can find them at StaceyBrownRandall.com/accelerator. I hope to see you in September.

Stacey Brown Randall: Alright, we are moving right along with the final three podcast takeover episodes. And this week, I'm excited to welcome LuAnn Nigara back to the podcast.

She was with me on [episode 362](#), which we will link to that episode in the show notes page for this episode, which is StaceyBrownRandall.com/371. Don't forget, Stacey has an E.

LuAnn is the owner of Window Works in New Jersey. She's the host of a very popular and quite viral podcast called A Well-Designed Business and the author of multiple books, one of which she and I are co-authors together.

She interviewed me on her podcast. Actually, she's interviewed me a couple of times on her podcast.

And one thing I want you guys to know about this interview is LuAnn's podcasts are in-depth. They are, like, long. And each of her interviews typically run about an hour, which is different from what you guys are used to with me.

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So I'm excited to have LuAnn take over this episode of the podcast and interview me for you guys to hear. So here we go, buckle up and let's get to it.

LuAnn Nigara: Hi, this is LuAnn Nigara from A Well-Designed Business podcast, and I am doing a podcast takeover today of the Roadmap to Referrals podcast. Here is an episode where I interviewed Stacey over on my show.

Now, I know you know Stacey. You love her. That's why you listen to her show. I'm just going to share with you a few things about Stacey that I love.

I love how passionate she is about teaching entrepreneurs how to find money in their existing business. I really feel like that's drilling down exactly what she does.

I have invited Stacey in the past to collaborate in one of my books. I've invited Stacey to be on my LuAnn Live stages and my Power Talk Friday stages.

And this is because every time I collaborate with Stacey, she brings such tremendous value to all of the people in the room. And I am so delighted for you to hear Stacey on the other side of the mic. Here we go.

LuAnn Nigara: Hi Stacey, thanks so much for coming back on A Well-Designed Business today.

Stacey Brown Randall: Oh my gosh, Lu, I'm so excited to be back.

LuAnn Nigara: Well, first of all, it's been too long since you've been on the show, number one, duh, like what the heck with that.

But I have to just tell everybody because right as we're recording, we're about a week and a half, two weeks out of our exciting Windows Conference and IWCE in Charlotte. And you came and keynoted for our exciting Windows conference.

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And I'm going to tell you what, like, you know when you do evaluations for an event that you run, Stacey, and you're like, what was your favorite thing?

And, you know, it's good when people like different parts, but when every single one is like, what was your highlight? Stacey Brown Randall, Stacey Brown Randall, Stacey Brown Randall.

I mean, I think fully 90% of the evaluations just were like, Stacey Brown Randall killed it. So I just have to share that on air, give you that cred. And of course, I wasn't surprised, but it was nice. And I did feel really super happy that it was my idea to have you.

Stacey Brown Randall: Well, it was a lot of fun. They were a great group and their questions, like they just didn't stop coming. I told Vin, I was like, I feel like I'm running over. How far over did I go?

He was like, it was like a couple of minutes. You're fine. I was like, because I wanted to answer all the questions. They were a great group, and it was a lot of fun. So thank you for having me.

LuAnn Nigara: Yeah, no, we're delighted. I mean, they're hardcore businesspeople over there at Exciting Windows.

And what's interesting and what I love about our Exciting Windows group is that we have people that are doing up to \$500,000 a year in gross sales, and we have people that are doing \$15 million plus.

And we all work together, and we collaborate, and we help. We break off into our groups so that, you know, different like people can kind of get help from the people at their stage.

But one of the real hallmarks of Exciting Windows is the cross-collaboration. So if you're doing a million, you get a lot of opportunity to sit and talk and learn and collaborate with people who are doing three and five million.

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Because it's like having that crystal ball into the future, like what are the problems that I don't even know I don't know I'm going to have? And somebody next to you has already navigated it. That's one of my favorite things about Exciting Windows is the collaboration.

Stacey Brown Randall: Yeah. Well, it was a lot of fun, and I really appreciated that you had everybody come to me in Charlotte. It made it really easy to get there to be able to speak.

LuAnn Nigara: Exactly. Oh my goodness. Okay. So here's the thing. Since you've been on the show, the show has grown tremendously here. We have a lot of new listeners that probably might know you from your own podcast but may not know you at all.

So your whole thing is growth by referrals, is referral marketing. And you have a completely different approach than what we think of when we think of referral marketing. So why don't you just kind of share that with us, your philosophy and your point of view on this. So we set the table.

Stacey Brown Randall: Yeah. So, you know, for decades and decades and decades, there's been a few traditional or what we call old school ways to generate referrals.

And they'll be like, you got to ask for them. You got to compensate for them. You've got to be gimmicky and promotional, right? Put in your email signature, the greatest compliment you can give me as a referral.

And these have been around for like, probably longer than I've been alive. And I'm like 12, so I'm just kidding. But yeah, they've been around forever.

And it's like asking the question, if referrals are so amazing and so awesome, why do the tactics stink that we are then taught about how to go about generating them?

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And so for me, it was just like, I want referrals too, just as much as the next person. But I don't want to feel awkward and uncomfortable and feel like I'm off brand by trying to generate them.

So for me, it was like, there's gotta be a better way. There's gotta be a different way. And it really kind of took me on a journey of figuring out how to generate referrals, which we call naturally, which doesn't mean no work.

I do want to say that, but it does mean like, you don't have to manipulate, you don't have to incentivize, you don't have to ask, but you have to focus on relationships and you got to have the right strategies in place that will actually not just have great relationships, but great referring relationships as well.

And so I just was like, I got to figure this out differently. And that's what I did. And then my clients were like, hey, how are you getting all these referrals? I'm like, oh, I don't know. Let me see. And then I had to figure out, oh, look, there's a process. There's a system.

And then eventually, I've been doing this 10 years now. So eventually, it was like, oh, look, there's science behind it. And we build it out a little bit differently.

But it's just the thing for someone to understand is like, Hey, you may have been told getting referrals is going to feel awful, but amazing when you get them, but it's going to feel awful trying to get them.

We're like, no, we think it should feel amazing trying to get them. And then when you get them as well.

LuAnn Nigara: So, and so that's interesting because, you know, it is one of the long-held tenants of salesmanship and everything is, You know, just ask every single client, do you have any friends that are like you?

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And it's so funny because I've said on the show a dozen times over, I started reading books on sales and salesmanship when I was 10 years old. It's crazy, but literally true. That is one thing that I just never did.

I was like, this is weird. Like this is, you're right. It just feels weird. Hey, um, we had such a great experience and then you love your window treatments and I'm so happy. Um, could you give me a list of like five people that are like you that want beautiful window treatments? And it's like, no, Right? And it's so funny.

You know what's also so funny, Stacey, is I can remember when, like, our kids were college age, and there's always one of our kids, each and every one of our kids, as they hit college age, at least one of their friends became a Cutco salesperson. Right? So Cutco knives, right? Which, by the way, is a great place to cut your teeth on selling, okay? Hardcore, right?

But literally part of the Cutco thing, and I don't know if it still is, but each one of those friends at one point would say, Mrs. Nigara, would you write down three of your friends or family that also might like to have beautiful knives? I'm like, I can't torture my friends and family with this phone call.

Stacey Brown Randall: Well, and that's usually how we feel. Like the crazy thing about referrals is like when people are like teaching you to ask, I think what's never been paid attention to before is, well, what's that feel like on the receiving end?

Like, but I think with like, we know, right? Cause our gut, we're like, oh, this is awkward for me. It's got to be awkward for them with me asking them.

But the strategies never took that into account. It was like, push through, just be uncomfortable, just push through. And you're like, but no, I don't want to have to be that uncomfortable to have something happen.

And, you know, it's just one of those things. It's that saying that's like, just because something has been like the long-standing advice, forever and ever in a day, doesn't mean it's necessarily the best advice.

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LuAnn Nigara: Yeah. And so you talk about doing referrals, generating naturally. And I love that you put the caveat, natural doesn't mean no work.

Natural doesn't mean whatever happens, happens. Que sera, sera. If I'm successful or if I'm not. Right? So what does that mean, generate them naturally then?

Stacey Brown Randall: Yeah, so the big thing about the old school strategy is like asking or compensating or being gimmicky or networking all the time. The goal of those is to actually artificially create or manufacture something that doesn't exist naturally.

So when you ask someone, hey, who do you know who would like a set of Cutco knives? I'm not in a moment where I'm thinking of someone who wants Cutco knives. I'm having to force it, right? So I'm having to artificially think about it.

So I'm artificially creating it. I'm manufacturing something to answer your question. And usually people don't. They just say, oh, I don't know. I'll think about it.

But those strategies, they're focused on you having the other person basically do work for you, right? It's like you're giving them homework.

And so you are looking at it from that perspective of manufacturing something or artificially creating something that truly, when we get a referral, the reason why it's so exciting to get a referral, that piece, which is the desire of that prospect to actually want to have a conversation with you, it can't be manufactured.

It cannot be artificially created. The prospect has to know they have a need. And then that's why they're looking for that recommendation or that referral to someone else, or that's coming up in conversation.

And so when we say naturally, what we mean is we're just removing the forced, that artificially created, that manufactured piece of generating

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referrals, and we're just replacing it with something that A, will feel more natural to do, and will feel more natural on your receiver's end, the person who's going to refer you by focusing on relationships, and then paying attention to the what you're doing, what you're saying when you're doing it, what's the cadence that you're doing it.

And like, I mean, I do say this a lot, but I have to say this as well is like, you know, it's focused on that relationship of how you want to be treated. And like doing that to the people that you hope will refer you with a referral mentality and we're using the right language and stuff.

But I mean, Lu, sometimes I'm just like all day long, I'm just telling people or reminding people to be a good person. And most of that is, it comes right down to the, how do you want to be treated? Do you want to be asked all the time? No, so let's do something different.

LuAnn Nigara: Right, right, right, right. Well, and it's true because in that example, when the kids over the years have done that, I literally am like, well, I'll put my mom. I'll throw my mom under the bus, and I'll put her name on it.

And then I'll put my best friend's name on it. But I'm going to call them and go, you're going to get a call from this 20-year-old kid trying to sell you knives. Right?

As opposed to when you are actually happy with somebody's services and you're like, I would still, I mean, love my cuckold knives. I still have the darn things are 30 years old, right? Like 20 years old. I do love them.

But it's more like if I were at a friend's house and she's like, darn it with this knife, I'd be like, Oh my goodness, you have to get a Cutco knife. Right? So that's, I understand you're saying that's what we want to go for.

But you also teach us how to be the person top of mind so that, because I also know, right, Window Works. I've run into people at the ShopRite. Oh

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my God, I haven't seen you in 10 years. How are you? How's your kids? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. What's new?

Oh, well, we downsized. We moved into a townhouse three years ago. And I'm like, wait a second. I didn't do those window treatments.

Like, here we are, we're all lovey-dovey in the, you know, the produce aisle. And I'm like, you know, and so it's like that. It's like, it happens. Good customers don't remember you or remember to call on you or remember to refer you.

Because they're just busy and they're just like, oh, you know, you know, we were walking by the mall and there was a blind shop, so we went in. So that's what you're doing, right?

So talk to us a little bit about that, how you're trying to help us create that relationship and that meaning so that we are referable.

Stacey Brown Randall: Yeah, and I think it comes down to you having a process, right? A process and a strategy. And we teach this from what we call the referral ecosystem.

A lot of people teach referrals like, hey, you need them, here's a strategy or a tactic, here's what you say in this moment, and off you go, and hopefully you get some referrals.

We look at it as there's actually a number of places where referrals can be hiding in your business if you're attuned to it and sometimes have the right strategies or know what to do in that certain situation.

And so we teach it from some things are specific person like they're person specific. Like do you have people referring you now, and you have people that you would love to refer you? Not everybody you know, not all your clients, but identifying specific people that can refer you.

So this is what we call the existing referral sources, the people who have referred you, and then the potential referral sources, the people that you

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want to ultimately refer you. And that strategy is to get referrals from specific people.

But the next piece in the ecosystem is actually our client experience. and making sure that is referable, right? You actually have to build a client experience with referability in mind.

And that isn't what a lot of people think in terms of like, I've got to be perfect because if that's the case, we're all screwed. Like, let's be honest, because nothing's going to go according to plan.

Like every time I work with an interior designer, I'm like, how many times does something go on backorder that you didn't know in advance? And now you've got to communicate that to a client. That's not you being imperfect. That is it happening to you and your client.

So I'm not looking for perfection, but most people think if I do a great job and I have a great work, we call it the work touch points. If I do great work touch points, I'm going to get referrals.

Well, if that were the case, you wouldn't even have me on the podcast right now because we'd all be drowning in referrals and nobody would need me.

The truth is when we're building a client experience that is focused on referability, it is the work you do, right? It is communication and managing expectations, right? And then of course, delivering an excellent product and all the things you're going to do.

But it's also making sure you're paying attention to the relationship that you are building during that client experience. And I don't mean you got to go have coffee or beer with all your clients like once a quarter for this to work.

I mean, infusing things in the moment that make you feel different than the average person that they would expect that they're hiring. And so we map out what the work is you're doing, and then we want to weave in certain relationship touch points as well.

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But this goes through the three stages of a client experience. So what you're talking about, So many years later, you're like, I did not do the blinds in your downsized townhouse, right? We know the new stage. Everybody knows the new stage. We know you're new, right?

And then we actually move into active where we're doing the work. And if the work ends, which it does for most people in this industry, when the work ends, they move into alumni.

Well, do you have a strategy in place for how you're continuing to nurture your alumni clients so that you can actually stay top of mind to generate referrals in a way that'll work, but won't break the bank because not all alumni clients are going to refer. But most people just, they forget. They forget about their clients from the past.

Like I just did it the other day. I did an outreach to a number of people who were in my group coaching program last year. And some renew and some don't. And for those that didn't renew, I, it was in the first quarter, and I was like, Hey, I'm just reaching out. How's it going? Do you need me?

Like, they're not paying me anymore, but like, this is me staying in front of my clients. A, because I care. B, because I get like ongoing testimonials. Let's be honest. And C, because if they have a question, I'd rather just answer it for them than them sit in confusion.

And so it's our ability to think through what that looks like that I feel business owners just look for the shortcut. They just look for the easy button. And sometimes these things aren't thought through.

If they become a process that is sometimes happening in the background, they're more likely to actually happen.

LuAnn Nigara: So that is an interesting thing that I'm, what I'm visualizing here is as interior designers, you know, if you're a well-run shop, you have the whole journey mapped out.

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You have what you're going to do in the design phase and the discovery phase of the design phase, the procurement phase and the project management phase and the installation phase and all of that. Right?

Stacey Brown Randall: Yep.

LuAnn Nigara: But what you're saying is, to add on to those existing things, what are you doing that is, I guess, truthfully just saying, setting yourself apart, making yourself memorable. These are the things that I'm hearing as you're talking. Because you're not saying, come in at this phase and say, hi, do you know anybody else that wants a kitchen?

Stacey Brown Randall: No, don't do that. So yeah, it's interesting. Okay, so let's use Denise. So she is a good friend of yours. She's a client in my BRB, my Building a Referable Business coaching program right now.

And we just did this for her. Well, actually, I shouldn't say just because it's been a little while. But one of the first things she looked at was her client experience. And she showed it to me.

And it was the typical interior designer experience. And they're fabulous, because they're like process oriented, right? Like you said, it's from the consultation, all the way down to taking pictures after we've done the install, right?

And I'm like, great, now we need to infuse the pieces that are going to actually make them think about referring you. And we need to infuse the relationship piece. That doesn't mean that she didn't have relationships and have great conversations with her clients, but we want to look for moments.

So we look at it as the work you do is great, that makes you referable. But now we want to look for referral moments throughout that process where you can just, hey, when you say this during that stage or during that outreach of a touchpoint, why don't you also add in this?

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Or, hey, let's add in something different here that's a little bit more of a wow factor that they don't see coming.

And so we took the structure, and I see this with almost all my interior designers, is they all have the same kind of structure to how the process goes because it is the design process, right? And we look at that and we say, OK, now let's just infuse into the relationship. And that will give us moments to plant referral seeds, use different language to impact them in a different way.

And that is what allows you to occupy more space in their mind, which then is what's going to allow them to think about referring you when it comes up, not just in the middle of their kitchen renovation, but months or years after their kitchen renovation.

And someone says something and they're like, oh, Denise, all the way, here you go. You'd be stupid to use somebody else. That's what we're looking for. And that takes intentionality and a plan.

LuAnn Nigara: And so what are some of those, what are some of the typical things? Like I know you've worked with a lot of interior designers one-on-one and in your programs, like my friend Denise, right?

So what are some of the things that is, what's an example of something that, you know, either maybe Denise infused, I know we're gonna talk about Janelle later too, because you've worked with Janelle as well. So what are some of those things? Just so that listeners can get an idea.

Stacey Brown Randall: I should have done my homework, and I should have gotten the episode that you and Janelle did, like forever ago.

LuAnn Nigara: We'll put it in the show notes, right?

Stacey Brown Randall: Okay, good. Forever ago when she was working with me, because I'm pretty sure she talked about this example and it's the exact same one I told Denise to do.

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And it's not a interior design specific example. It's a must have best practice example. And I just tell people to modify it to fit their industry. So, you know, I've got an architect out in San Francisco. I'm like, this will begin your client experience now.

So we look for things that are going to have a wow impact, but we're not looking to spend a ton of money or something that's going to take a lot of logistical lift, right? Because none of us have time for that.

One of the things that people will sometimes think about doing when they bring on a new client. So when the new client fades, one of the things they'll think about doing with the new client is to send them a thank you note, right? For like being like, thanks so much for becoming a client.

That's good. A lot of people think about doing it, don't do it, right? So doing it is certainly better than not doing it.

But what we teach is that you have to understand what's going through the mind of your client in each of the stages as they move from new to active to alumni.

And in the new stage, even though there is this mix of great excitement to work with you, there's always an underlying moment of buyer's remorse.

Of like, oh, did I pick the right person? Oh, will this go well? Oh, do I really want this? Even if they like push those feelings down, like it's always there.

So I tell them we want like not just a thank you card. We want a welcome to the journey card. Right? So it's a still a handwritten thank you note, but we're just switching it just slightly to meet them where they are.

And it's when you meet people where they are, or you do things they don't see coming. That is when you like click into that, oh, I love her, or I love him. He's fabulous. Right?

And so in that journey card, like call out the buyer's remorse. I mean, don't call it that don't use those words, but you know.

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When people join my program, I'm like, look, we're going to build a referable business. It's going to stretch you. It's going to challenge you. You've got work to do. But I am your copilot, and I am ready and able. So let's do this.

Like it's infusing that piece of she gets it. He gets it right. And so it's if you're doing a thank you card, just use a little bit slightly different language. If you're not, please add that to your client experience.

Now, you can't just do like this welcome to the journey card and stop.

LuAnn Nigara: It doesn't get you much cred for the next year and a half of the project.

Stacey Brown Randall: Right. Yeah, we always say one little thing is not going to unleash a river of gold.

LuAnn Nigara: Well, it's like going to the gym one time. That's it. I'm good. I'll see you next year.

Stacey Brown Randall: Yeah, I mean, look at those biceps, baby. Right? Like, yeah. So, and that's what it's everything builds on itself.

What I'm hoping my clients will do when they work with me is think about what they're building, the processes, the strategies, the tactics, right? Thinking about those though as being built into an experience that they are delivering on for their people.

Whether those are their referral sources, delivering a referral source experience, or a client experience that is focused on referability and like really paying attention to everything you do builds on the thing that came before.

It's how when you have people referring you, and it's years later, and people are like how do they even remember you? You're like because I'm not letting them forget me.

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LuAnn Nigara: Right. Right.

Stacey Brown Randall: Like I'm still infusing, you know, and that will change over time of course, that makes sense. Some people will refer for a short amount of time, some people will refer for a long amount of time and you don't know when they start. But I do know if you nurture them, you got a better chance of keeping the referrals coming.

LuAnn Nigara: Yeah. Well, it's interesting because as you describe that difference between a thank you card for engaging with me and welcome to the journey card, like I literally just signed yesterday for a pretty significant decision on my part.

And I feel a thousand percent. I'm like, I waited too long to make this decision. I hired an integrator, right? So, and I'm just going to say like Casey Gromer was on the show about a month ago and that's who I just hired folks. I'm like, that's it. I'll have some of that. Right?

So I actually feel 100% and I have no remorse, and I actually cannot wait. However, I know that I've been in that situation where you are like, not where I am now, but like I can picture if I were a little bit like, you know what it is? Let me just be very clear.

I am so far past the point that I need her that I can't even wonder if I did the right thing. Like, you know what I mean? This is like, your house is falling down around you folks, and you know, you need an interior designer. That's where I am right now. I definitely need an interior designer, right?

But I know if I had come to it, even when I interviewed her two months ago, I would have been just what you said. If I got a thank you card, I would have been like, well, that's very nice, this better freaking work. Like, you know what I'm saying? Like, okay, thanks for the thank you card, but let's see the stuff, right?

And I just am really relating, if anytime you bought a major purchase, and you have felt like, and interior design is a major purchase. And so for that

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card to, like you said, acknowledge it and just be like, hey, we're going to do this together. I'm super excited to do your house, and we're in the beginning of this journey together. Thank you for getting on with me.

Like, that is, because I breathed when you said that. I was like, oh. Yeah. Okay. Like this is crazy. I just gave her \$50,000 for like an interior design project, but it's going to be fine. Right?

Stacey Brown Randall: It's going to be good. Yeah. I think we forget what our clients are feeling as they move through the stages of working with us. Right? I mean, and so I think it's important.

Like for me, I'll have people come into my program and they're like, I know you get people who double, triple or quadruple their referrals and they do it in 90 days. And they're like, give me some of that.

And I'm like, that is not a guarantee. There are some things in place, right? And some hard work put in to get somebody there. And some do it. And some, you know, triple or quadruple their referrals, we need nine months, right?

Like, we'll get you there. But it may not happen in 90 days. And acknowledging that and the things and the perceptions that we have, because let's be honest, right?

And I actually learned this hard lesson that I now infuse in other people's businesses with the very first interior designer I ever worked with.

And it was, it's a funny situation, but like, I was like, yes, we were adding onto our house. And I was like, I don't know how to pick out colors. I mean, I don't know how this works. I don't know. Like I came in and the house was kind of done. Right?

I don't know how to do carpets and all the things, right. And window treatments and all the things. And she was like, she came in, she made me

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feel amazing. I loved it. It was everything about it was awesome. She's incredible.

And then crickets. And I was like, okay, right? And so then I do what every human does. I started to make assumptions on what it actually looks like to do her job as the interior designer. And I was like, I mean, it's some paint and some carpet, right?

LuAnn Nigara: How hard could it be?

Stacey Brown Randall: How hard is this? Why haven't I heard from her in two weeks? So my husband, who is obnoxiously calm and usually right, and is the one who's always like, why don't you just be normal for a second, Stacey? But he was like, why don't you just reach out to her? And like ask.

LuAnn Nigara: And find out where she is.

Stacey Brown Randall: Right. And like, it's a creative process. Like it doesn't like, you know me, I'm like, let's do it. Check off the boxes. Let's get going.

And it's true because what I got from her was amazing and magnificent. And if I was rushing her, I'm glad she wasn't like A, admitting it or B, like ignored me because what I got was exactly what I wanted. I mean, this is the lady that talked me into putting black carpet in my master bedroom.

LuAnn Nigara: Woah.

Stacey Brown Randall: I know, and every time I walked in there, I was like, this is heaven. I know most people, and there's, I don't know, probably half your listeners are like, um, that's not okay.

This was also like 2010. I don't know if I would do it today. Right? But the reality of it is, is that it's that ability to kind of build that relationship with your client as you go and anticipating their needs. That's the easier part of being referral.

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There's still those moments we want to infuse and opportunities to be able to plant referral seeds and things like that. But it's just reminding yourself, like, what is it like to sign on the dotted line that they're now going to pay you \$25,000 or \$50,000 to do your design fee.

LuAnn Nigara: Yes. Then they're also going to buy the stuff.

Stacey Brown Randall: Buy the stuff. And then hire the contractor if they're doing like a kitchen. Like, it's all the things. And it doesn't matter luxury or not. Like, every human has that momentary thought. Unless, like you said, you're so far past the point. You're just like, save me! Just save me!

LuAnn Nigara: That's right. You're just like, hanging by a thread.

Stacey Brown Randall: Right. Yes.

LuAnn Nigara: However, I will get to that point, like you. If the experience doesn't start to match up, I will get to that point where I start to question. And so to your point, you're looking for the steps all through the process, not just that first one.

So I don't need it now. If I get it tomorrow, who knows? I don't know. It doesn't matter. I don't actually need it now. But there might be a moment in three or four weeks where.

Like to your point, when somebody works with you, you're like, this is simple, but not easy. Like it makes sense. I have the science, I have the process to help you grow your business through referrals, but it doesn't mean you're going to sit back and do nothing.

And so just like interior design and just like what I'm expecting with the integrator, there's going to be the point where it's hard. And at that moment is when you probably need to start to do a touch point again, right?

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Stacey Brown Randall: Yeah, so actually one of the things we teach that I love people to put into place with their referable client experience is what we call the expectation map.

It is the, here's what you can expect by working with me, but we do it as a visual. Now you don't have to do it as a visual, but it's so much prettier, let's be honest. And I don't know any of my interior designers have never made it a visual.

But it could be like, hey, here's what you can expect bullet points, right? Or it can be, or think Candyland, right? Game like a game, right? Like, here's the experience.

Because if you set that in the beginning, even when they're in the buyer's journey as a prospect, hey, here's what it's like if we move forward, and then you do it again in the new stage. Now you've created language.

So when that couch that they're dying to have in before their Christmas meal is now on back order, you can go back to that expectation map and be like, do you remember when we talked about this happening?

And it's not fun and I hate it, and you hate it, we all hate it, but we're beholden to the, you know, the ship's coming in from wherever the furniture's coming in from, I don't know, right?

Then you have something that you can bring them back to, like, here's where you are. Here's where you are in your expectation map, like here's the place that we are, remember?

And it's an easier way to basically like stop being a pain in my butt client, love you, because I told you this was going to happen. And guess what? It happened.

And like, not that you think your clients are pains in the butts, of course we don't. But the reality of it is, is that we forget almost everything we're told, let's be honest, right?

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So we are told in the beginning there can be back orders, but we don't remember that until now we're faced with the emotional reminder that I'm now having a back order, my couch won't be here for Christmas dinner, right?

So there's these things that we can put into place that allow the person to be like, got it, got it, and kind of allows the client to be like, I know my place, so to speak, from that perspective.

LuAnn Nigara: So that is, you know, what I have to tell you, Stacey, is I don't think, it's not official and I don't have any actual factual data to support it.

But I can tell you anecdotally, is that a word? Anecdotally, right? I think I said it properly. I remember when Janelle Photopoulos was on the podcast and she talked about how she had heard about you on the show and then she went and hired you and worked with you, right?

And the significant thing that she shared on that show was exactly to what you just said. She was talking about how we all know in interior design it's the middle part when the house is ripped apart and nothing seems like it's coming in.

And this is the longest, hardest time in the design process. And it's also the period of time that the client is writing the most amount of checks, typically. and has the least amount to show for it. And it's also the period of time that coincidentally as well, that it's the least amount of time that the designer needs to be in contact with the client.

That it's like the vortex of the three worst things. Their house is in a shambles, they're writing checks every week, and you don't really need to talk to them.

And so previously, designers would be in their own world, doing their own thing, working on the design phase for another project, right? And just

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being like, here, send us this bill, send us this money, send us this site. Yeah, your place is a mess.

And she talked about how you counseled her to not only set them up for that process and say, this is the part that's going to hurt. This is the part that's not going to feel fun. And here's the three reasons why, right?

We're not going to have as much communication. You're going to write checks like they're water and your house is going to feel yucky. And she said, then to your point, when they get cranky during that period, you can say, we talked about this. I described this to you.

And I want to say, I'm going back an interview like six years ago, I feel like she also was. And at that point, if it is their kitchen that we're ripping open, we're sending them gift certificates to go eat at restaurants at this point.

And the thing that I want to say is, that was the first time that anybody mentioned that. The out loud of that phase was hard and difficult for the client. And to my recollection, it was the first time anybody mentioned the remedy for it.

And when I tell you, Stacey, do you know how many designers have that as part of their process now? And I'm telling you that you and I can't take credit for all of it. Okay. But I know we will, we, yes, we're going to talk a tiny bit, right?

But I know that a lot of designers heard Janelle tell what she learned from you. And then over the next year to two years, it started to be, and when I get to this point in the process, and I would always think back to how you talked about it, how she talked about you telling her.

And now it's like, of course we tell our clients that this is the crappy part of the, like, you have to be, exactly, but it because it's like I like what I'm saying is it's I think because I've been around since seven years doing this.

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And because that was like a very significant moment and I had tons of people reach out to me and say, wow, that's amazing idea that Janelle and Stacey did, you know, blah, blah, blah, that it's become almost how could you not do that, that nobody even remembers that you are the germ of it for the industry.

And I'm not saying that there isn't a designer out there that's been in business for 15 or 20 years and isn't sitting there listening and saying, I've always done that. Great. I'm glad because you're smarter than the rest of us. But I know there is a generation of designers over the last seven years that are doing it because you taught it to Janelle and Janelle taught it to us.

Stacey Brown Randall: You know, it's so interesting because in retrospect, it's like so simple. Like, why wouldn't we tell you there's going to be things that are going to happen that are out of our control? Like, why wouldn't we acknowledge that? But, you know, it's that idea, like, we want everything to be fancy, and you know, smooth and seamless.

LuAnn Nigara: And it's also human nature to think that this time it isn't going to be that difficult. Like, oh, this project it won't be that hard. The kitchen will only be unusable for two weeks instead of two months.

Stacey Brown Randall: Right. I don't think our interior designers should ever behave like our contractors do. Right? Six months. Don't worry. A year later, it'll be done.

LuAnn Nigara: Like the money pitcher. Two weeks. When's it going to be done? Two weeks.

Stacey Brown Randall: Right. Like, we're better than that. And what I teach people, and it's funny because when Denise came into my coaching program, Referable Client Experience is one of the trainings she went through, and we just made hers better.

I was like, oh, yeah, let me put my eyeballs on it. Let's do it up. And I remember making her expectation map. And sometimes I get the question

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of, does it have to be a map? Does it have to? And I'm like, it should. It does not have to be. I don't want that to keep you from doing it. The logistics of it keep you from doing it.

But here's what having something actually in writing, and I don't mean your contract. I mean like a pretty visual that shows the process, right? And we have a ton of examples in the program.

But I want it to be that because for some of us, it is way easier to just be like, hey, I'm attaching our expectation map to this email in response to your frustration.

I just want you to be able to see it again. I'm sure you don't have it at your fingertips. Just want you to be able to see it again of where we are in this process. Remember we talked about this?

Because the visual helps and really at that point because let's be honest, most people would say, remember we talked about this? And normal people would be like, yes, I don't like it but I remember we talked about it. Some would be like

LuAnn Nigara: No we didn't. Like no, I don't remember it that you never said that.

Stacey Brown Randall: You did not tell me that. Right. But I did show you this pretty map of what it could look like, and you can't deny that. Like that's what I told Denise. I'm like, in the packet, it goes in the packet, and they keep it forever and ever.

LuAnn Nigara: No, it's the truth because listen, we all, all day long, all of us get that line. No, you didn't. You didn't tell me that. That's not what happened. I'm like, OK, OK. Alright. We didn't say, you know, we just said the same thing every sales appointment, but we didn't say it this time. Great. Love it.

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Well, and it's funny too, because I know when I train the salespeople here at Window Works and when I am doing trainings for salespeople in other companies as well, I recommend that the things that you have learned that are the difficult parts in the client journey that you know from experience, these are the touch points that people push back on, that they say, this hurts and this is painful and you didn't tell me and I didn't know.

I always recommend, and this is my own personal practice, was I use the same language to describe those highlighted parts, right? So for example, Billy, my installer, and I have worked together closely for 40 years.

And so if there's certain things, like if I sell a room darkening shade and there's no drapery around it, he knows darn well that I have not said that this is going to be Las Vegas dark, right?

And I say, this is going to make the room darker. You're going to have a halo effect of light. What does that mean? It's going to look like your window is wearing a halo. We're not at church, but it will look like it. You know what I mean? And I say very memorable, specific things every time.

Because Billy knows that when he's on the install, he can say, did she discuss whether it would have a halo effect? I don't know. She's crazy. She always talks about your shades going to church, or if it would be Las Vegas dark.

And to your point, you can't ignore that, right? Your 99% of your garden variety humans are not going to point blank lie to that. And to your visual of the map is that same mechanism, right?

It's like, maybe I don't remember you telling me, but yes, I do remember the Candyland game. Shoot. Or I saw it, but I didn't read it. Well, that's a good one. Love that. Okay.

Stacey Brown Randall: Oh yeah, that's my favorite. The skimmers. Skimmers delight. Yes.

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LuAnn Nigara: But see, we don't have to be responsible for skimmers, right? It's like, I'm sorry, sweetie. I'm not your mama. You know, if you signed on the dotted line and you didn't read all the documentation, that's sort of on you.

So you had really, I mean those are two designers I happen to know personally, Denise Pough and Janelle Photopoulos, that have worked. But you've worked with dozens of designers over the years.

Stacey Brown Randall: Oh yeah. Those are just some of the ones that I always like to bring up because I think they have some really memorable stories, right? I mean, Denise is just more present, right?

Like because she's in my coaching program right now and she's in her second year. She just renewed. And so I get to hang with her. I get to talk to her. I get to see things and then I get to hear about all the fabulous places she's traveling to.

LuAnn Nigara: I know. She's always off to somewhere.

Stacey Brown Randall: Somewhere, I know. And Janelle, even though it's been years since we've worked together, she is actually a referral source of mine. She has referred designers to me as well.

But she has one of my favorite stories because there's a strategy that I teach, and it's called Referring Machines. And it is, I mean, we call it internally, like with my members, we call it the slog, which is probably not a very positive way to talk about one of your trainings.

But it's a process of how you take somebody that you want to refer you that's never referred you, and how you cultivate a relationship with them so they'll start referring you by making it their idea and not yours by having to directly ask or pay or anything like that.

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And so she has actually one of my largest referrals received by following that process. And so for a lot of interior designers, they have architects or others like that in the industry that they want to refer clients to them.

They know they're going to get some referrals from their clients. And we put strategies in place to nurture that. But when we want to make sure we're getting referrals from somebody else who probably has other interior designers that they refer to now, and now you're competing, or you feel maybe like you're competing.

But Janelle's story is, when she went through Referring Machines, and she was like, OK, I want to cultivate. Here's the architects. Here's the people I want to cultivate. And she went through that process. She emailed me.

It was over a year later. And I have the email up on my board because it's highlighted. Like it's one of my favorite things to just look at. And she literally emailed me, and she was like, we got our largest referral to date.

And I was like, yeah, mine too. Um, she was like, we got our largest referral to date. That architect that was on my Referring Machine list from over a year ago, finally referred us and it was \$620,000 of a referral. over a half a million-dollar referral.

And so I use her as an example, because when people are doing this, and they're putting in the work, and they're generating referrals, and they're trying to cultivate new people, Denise went through this too.

It's like, I know there's a pot of gold at the end of your rainbow. I've seen it for 10 years now. I know there's a pot of gold at the end of your rainbow. I mean, maybe if you're not a good person, maybe not. But let's just assume you're a good person and you'll do the work.

But there is a pot of gold at the end of your rainbow. But what I cannot tell you is how long it's going to take for you to get to your pot of gold.

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But Janelle was relentless, not in terms of how she followed up, but she was relentless in having a process and a system. And she followed my advice, which I really appreciate. And so she put it into practice. And she was willing to go slow to get to the promised land, that pot of gold, in a bigger way than she ever imagined.

She was willing to make it about the architect, and to build a relationship, and not be pushing for referrals, and not try to be pushing her portfolio on them, and stuff like that. They can Google you. Don't worry. They will, if they have any interest. And she just worked the system.

And we call it the slog, because you're literally working backwards, because you're making it all about them and nothing about you. So it feels like you're going backwards.

But for someone to decide to refer you, yes, they need to know you're a good interior designer, but they're actually going to probably assume you are. What they really need to decide is that they like you, right? And that you're somebody they can work with and that you care about them. And you've shown that repeatedly because you've made this process of cultivation about them.

And she was relentless in her willingness to stick to the program and follow the process. And then guess what? She got rewarded \$620,000. Like, hello.

And I'm sure she'll have more like that coming, not only from that architect but others. But it's just so important for people to understand, is like a lot of people talk about referrals.

Well, let me, I saw an email the other day, someone sent it to me and they're like, the language is literally, let me free you from inconsistent referrals.

You don't need to be freed from anything. What you need is a strategy and a system to make those inconsistent referrals consistent.

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Denise got double digit referrals for the first time last year. Janelle got over a half a million-dollar referral. It's there, but you gotta work the system.

LuAnn Nigara: I think it's awesome. You know, I mentioned in the introduction that you have a chapter in the First Power Talk Friday Experts book.

And, you know, you've got tips in there. I mean, there's a place to start. And, you know, you also have your podcast, which you go through this every single week on some of the actual strategies and in the weeds and conversations with other people who have done it.

So my thing is, is I always like to know that, you know, like for me, my philosophy on the show is, for every consultant that comes on, is there a place for somebody to get your goodness, to get your expertise, that they can, wherever they are in the journey.

You know, and I always say, we spend our time, or we spend our money. So some people listening will be like, bang, here's the dollar bills, let me get in your program, just teach me how to do it like you did Denise and Janelle.

And other people will say, no, I need to do it with time now instead of money. And of course, between the chapter in the book, your own book that you wrote, and the podcast, and I'm sure you've got resources on your website, there are things you can do whether you are choosing to spend time or money to accelerate your referral process.

And so I love that because that is kind of one of my things. It's like everybody has to be able to get some of this goodness, however they choose to show up for it.

But before I let you go, like one or two things, like where does a designer kind of start with this? I know we have to pick apart our journey. I know we have to pick apart our process and infuse the things, but is there something that you would leave us with or get us thinking about?

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Stacey Brown Randall: Yeah, I mean, for people who love to read, grab the book, because it's going to break everything down for you.

If you're a podcast listener, because you're listening to this one, you probably have room for one more. It's Roadmap to Referrals podcast. Join me every Tuesday, and we break apart all the things. You can actually hear an interview with Denise and things like that.

But what I would tell for the person who is like, they're not at the dollar bills place, right? And they're like, hey, I am in this place, and I need to consume some more information.

I like to think what I teach is time-released learning, and it takes people time to get to where they need to be to decide to take the next step.

And right now, you just need information, and I need to shift your mindset, and I need to give you some tactical, practical things you can do.

And so we have a resource tab on the website. And when you go to that resource tab, it's going to say, have you been in business less than two years or more than two years? So you're going to pick your section and there's going to be three things, just three.

One's going to be a quiz that you can take to figure out what level of referral generation you're at. One will be like, hey, let's, let me show you exactly how to identify who your existing referral sources are or who your potentials are. And then let me show you how to calculate what your referrals could look like in a year.

It's very practical, tactical things. And we do break them down by how many years you've been in business or how many referral sources you have. That's the best place to start because you're going to just consume so much information.

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And I know you're going to start thinking about this stuff differently. And at the end of the day, whether you're a client of mine or not is actually kind of irrelevant.

What I really want is that for you to be thinking about referrals differently and for you to know that they can be a foundational part of your business that you can have and see consistency with.

But I do want you to recognize, though you may deserve those referrals, you're not owed them. So you have to be willing to do the work to generate them.

LuAnn Nigara: That is the money line right there. I love that, Stace. I don't know that I've heard you say that before, and that's the money line.

Though you may deserve them, you know, you still have to earn them, right? You know, yeah. Yeah, you're not owed. That's awesome.

That, you know, it's funny, because every once in a while in a conversation, somebody hits me with a line like that. And it's like I just have to keep rolling it around in my brain because that is the bottom line of this everything in life, right?

Like everybody deserves all the goodness, all the riches, but no one's owed it. And so we have to show up and we have to do our part. And, you know, like you said, be a good human, right?

Stacey Brown Randall: For the people at the Exciting Windows conference that had me sign their book, that's actually what I signed in their book.

And someone was like, Oh, you're, you're actually writing something to us. And I'm like, well, it's, it's kind of the thing. Like it's kind of the main thing I believe, you deserve referrals, but you aren't owed them. So let's get to work.

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But yeah, but I think it's a fundamental piece that anybody needs to accept in their business, regardless of what your referral generation strategies and stuff will look like down the road.

LuAnn Nigara: Because you know what I love about that too. I didn't realize it was your signature line. That's good.

Stacey Brown Randall: It has been ten years and like six years since I've been with you, so I've gotten better with that.

LuAnn Nigara: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Good game, girl. Good game. But the thing about that is, is what's powerful about that sentence, that statement, is it puts the power back in your hands too.

You're not walking around waiting for the universe to drop the referrals on you. It's that transition in your mindset that you're really advocating that this is a thing that you can do. It's a process you can do. Just like you can design a room, you can design a business that generates referrals. So, so awesome.

Stacey Brown Randall: That's a good money line too right there. I need to be borrowing that. **LuAnn Nigara:** Oh my goodness. You're a love. I just think your energy is amazing. The way you show up and support interior design industry is fantastic.

I know that, you know, Denise, like we're, you know, literally like every other week and then Stacey this and Stacey told me that and you know, and I'm like, go girl.

Stacey Brown Randall: I got to tell you this quick Denise story. She was literally, so we do, for all the members that are in my coaching program, they actually come together for two days. At the end of the year, we do an in-person retreat and it's included as a free bonus within their membership in our coaching program.

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And Denise was there, and somebody asked her a question, and she's so classic Denise, right? Like, so someone says like, well, what was it worth it? Like she was talking about a process she had gone through within the program, and it was a lot of work.

And somebody said, well, was it worth it? And she does this, she goes... And I'm thinking to myself, where the heck is she going with this? And she goes, well, I mean, everything Stacey tells you to do is worth it. And I was like, oh sweet Jesus, why weren't we recording that? You know what I mean? It's classic her.

LuAnn Nigara: It is so classic her.

Stacey Brown Randall: She is awesome.

LuAnn Nigara: Oh my God. She is, she's a love.

Stacey Brown Randall: Yes, you know what she is? She's somebody who, she will invest in her business when she knows it's something she wants to learn and then she will put in the work. I mean and that is like those are dream clients.

LuAnn Nigara: It's the truth because we both meet lots of people that invest in all kinds of things and they just go through the process and then you know they either intellectually understand that they're not doing the work, and they just let it go.

But then, I've had conversations with people that are like, oh, that didn't work. And I'm like, well, did you do it? Well, I mean, you know, it, you know, I mean, not yet. Oh, you're right.

Stacey Brown Randall: I mean, I've been thinking about it for so long. It should have just manifested itself.

LuAnn Nigara: Yeah. Like, you know, it just happens.

Stacey Brown Randall: Right. I've just been thinking about it for so long.

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LuAnn Nigara: But both of those women, Janelle and Denise, they do the work. So that's awesome. All righty, my friend. Thank you so much for joining me today. I appreciate you so much, Stacey.

Stacey Brown Randall: Oh, it was my pleasure. Thank you.

LuAnn Nigara: Thanks so much for joining me on this podcast takeover on the Roadmap to Referrals podcast. I hope you'll visit my podcast as well, A Well-Designed Business, and connect with me at luannnigara.com or at LuAnn Nigara on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

All of the links that we mentioned in this episode can be found in the video or on the show notes for this episode. Now here's Stacey.

Stacey Brown Randall: I hope you enjoyed this episode and don't forget to show LuAnn some love by checking out her podcast and more information on all of her businesses on the show notes page for this episode at StaceyBrownRandall.com/371.

We're back with another great episode next week created with you and your needs in mind. Until then, you know what to do my friend, take control of your referrals and build a referable business. Bye for now.