



# The Business Of Website Design With Greg Merrilees



Meeting James Schramko changed designer Greg Merrilees' business and his life. Read his story in this episode of SuperFastBusiness.



**Greg Merrilees**

**James:** James Schramko here, welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 695. Chatting with my good friend Greg Merrilees from [Studio1Design.com](http://Studio1Design.com). Hey, Greg.

**Greg:** Hey, James, how are you, buddy?

**James:** That's a nice domain name.

**Greg:** It is indeed. You helped me get that one, if I remember rightly, five years ago.

**James:** When we search for your name on SuperFastBusiness, it comes up a lot. You get a lot of mentions. I think part of the reason for that is you've been somewhat of a super fan of the business, and I just wanted to say how much I appreciate your support over the many years since we first connected. You've been on [previous episodes](#) talking about various different things, when we [changed our logos](#). You have been the designer behind what you see at SuperFastBusiness.com and [JamesSchramko.com](#) and [SilverCircle.com](#). And of course, some of those podcasts, all of them, actually, I think you designed. And the first one that brought us together was [ThinkActGet](#).

**Greg:** Yes.

## Just came in and took over

**James:** When you submitted a new design and initially we said, no, we're okay, and then you were relentless. And then you showed up to [SuperFastBusiness Live](#) and you had some T-shirts for us, and you just came into our life and then took over all the design, pretty much how it worked.

**Greg:** Yeah. And look, the reason is because, like, my business was totally different back then, right? I had an office – I remember you came to my office and said, so why do you have this office? I said, well, don't you need an office when you have full time designers and local clients? And you said, what if I could show you a better way? And then I just signed up for [SilverCircle](#) and the rest is history.

But you know, I had a pretty big why back then. Because the clothing industry was going vertical, and now clients were getting squeezed out. So I had to pivot and I looked for online opportunities. And then I found ThinkActGet, and I just love listening to that podcast so much. So that's when I sent you the free logo, because you said your logo sucked, you know, on the podcast, so I thought, I'm just going to send them a free logo to say thanks. And yeah, I remember you guys didn't like the first one. So then I did a new one, and I remember [Ezra](#) said, hot dang! And you know, true Ezra style. And yeah, the rest is history. It was good fun.

## Like night and day

**James:** It was an interesting shift for you. And so, when you were listening to ThinkActGet, of course, for Ezra and I that stuff was normal business as usual. But for you, it was completely shifting your paradigm, wasn't it?

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** Because, you know, let's talk about what was the design industry before? I remember when I visited your office, you actually had a little showroom section and you had some merch that you were putting inside some of the clothing stores or even department stores.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** How did it used to work in terms of the type of customer you were dealing with, what sort of things they would ask you to do, and when they would pay you, compared to designing for online entrepreneurs now?

**Greg:** It's totally different. So back then, we used to only have a handful of local clients, like, you know, maybe half a dozen to 10 clients. And so we used to go and see those clients, you know, once-a-week type of thing. And they would give us some design orders for T-shirts, right? And they would pretty much just be them going overseas and bringing back samples and saying, we want something that looks and feels like this. And then we would take the brief and then we would deliver the design and then they'd give us revisions and then the buyers and then the licensing agencies would give us revisions until it was approved. And then we'd have to wait two months to get paid. And one particular client, I won't name them, but pretty big offline retailer, they said, we'll pay you five percent less if we pay you within two months.

So yeah, it was a terrible cash flow business. You know, I had six full-time Australian designers in house at that point. So yeah, it was really, really hard to stay afloat. And then yeah, when the retails went vertical, I had no choice. I had a young family at the time and had a mortgage; we just bought a new house. And yeah, that's when I knew something had to change, but I didn't know what it would be. And that's when I found you.

## The hiring side of things

**James:** Does having a more virtual business mean you still can't hire Australian talent? Because I think that's probably the question mark on someone's mind.

**Greg:** No, I still do hire Australian talent. In fact, I kept all of my Australian designers on, but I just changed the model from being an employee to a contractor. And that didn't suit all of them, but one of them in particular, we've just embraced that opportunity for her to work from her own home. She now lives in Wollongong, so she went up there, she got married, she has two kids. She's been with me for 10 years. So yeah, it's good for some people. It just doesn't suit all people. But yeah, I'm happy to hire designers that are based anywhere in the world. It doesn't matter anymore.

**James:** Right. You know, you do all my work, and you're in Melbourne and I'm in Sydney.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** And your team are distributed around the place, as are mine. But in terms of the actual business, when you made that shift over the last however many years, gosh, it must have been a while now. Is it five or six years?

**Greg:** Yeah, totally. Yeah.

## Business is good

**James:** What has that meant in terms of how good the business is for Greg?

**Greg:** Yeah, so it's changed a lot. I mean, I work from home now. So you know, I get to take my daughter to school, get to pick her up, take her to sports, if she's sick, all that sort of stuff. I'm there for her, basically. And yeah, so, you know, most of our clients now based all around the world and that's from initially, I'll just tell a quick story about, you know how I sent that T-shirt design to you and Ezra for ThinkActGet. You said, Well, why don't you send that to other influencers? And so I did that and sent it to people like, you know, [Pat Flynn](#) and [John Lee Dumas](#) and [Perry Marshall](#) and a whole bunch of others. Even Russell Brunson, you know, [LeadPages](#). And so then, yeah, that's what sort of built our reputation to all these other communities. And then built trust with those influencers. And then, you know, they spread us out to their communities as well.

So yeah, now our clientele looks a lot different. And we get paid upfront, which is probably one of the best things about this online business model.

**James:** It sure is, and you're really taking advantage of that question, who has my customers?

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** I've got your customers, and other podcasters have your customers. So yes, it makes sense that you keep doing good work for them, and they're happy to share it. I mean, I'm ecstatic about the designs coming through. I'm not sure if I ever told you, but the new design for SuperFastBusiness, combined with [new copy](#), it really lifted the business earlier this year. It just took it into the next level.

**Greg:** I love hearing that.

## It's not cheap, but it makes a difference

**James:** You know, like, I'm a huge convert of good design. Because when I started online, I had no design. You'd be horrified to know I was sort of messing around with fonts and color palettes, with trying to get the right header panel and stuff. It was really ugly. I mean, you could look in the Wayback Machine at some of my old properties, and you might want to vomit.

But you know, design is not cheap when you want to get good design, but you can still pay good money and get ugly design. The car industry seems to prove that. Some of the cars they wheel out, you think, who was on the design approval that day? But if you want to have good design, you have to invest a little bit. But what it does, it really lifts the perception of the brand, the confidence of the buyer, the professionalism. I mean, look at the handful of the top authorities or gurus who you could mention in any field, and I bet you they're going to have a pretty professional-looking site.

And then when we're out in the market competing with a really ugly little site in any kind of authority space, it means you're going to be pecking lower on the totem pole, right? It's just how it is. And I've seen, actually quite interestingly, I've seen some people who aren't even that, you know, I would say, they're not that talented or special, but really great design has carried them a little further than they might have gotten otherwise. What do you think about that?

**Greg:** Yeah, look, design does play an important role. I would say not as important as copywriting, and yeah, your copywriting is amazing. And yeah, [Brian McCarthy](#) did a great job on that. But the role of the design is to enhance the copy and the messaging and have a visual hierarchy that makes it easy for people to know what to do next, just by looking at it. They get a sense of, you know, they read the copy, and then they see the design around it and it matches the copy as far as giving it wings, essentially.

So let's pick a business for instance. You might have a certain target market, and you can't really, or you might not really describe that target market in the words so much as showing that target market in the visuals, you know? Getting a result from your product, for instance, product or service. So, yeah, the visuals can really enhance the copy, and they can increase the perceived value. Like, we've designed for some clients where, you know, they had started out with a template and you know, putting up a website themselves, which is totally fine. And then when they make money, they come to us and then we'll design even better, and then their results get boosted even more. So, I mean, it just depends where you are in business, if you say it is expensive or as an investment. But yeah, it can give most businesses a boost.

## Website design then and now

**James:** Just on that topic, it's interesting because we have people in our community at different stages in terms of what platforms they're using.

**Greg:** Yep.

**James:** The old way was you get WordPress and you buy a theme.

**Greg:** Yes.

**James:** There's lots of free themes out there as well. A lot of them have really janky code with weird stuff in them. So you have to be careful with that.

**Greg:** Sure.

**James:** Then there's paid themes, and there were very popular paid themes. And you can get a reasonable start with a paid theme. But then you need someone technical to develop that, or to at least sort of skin your site with it, update the theme and tune all the plugins. And I was in that business for many years – we had a website development business. And it's quite complex, you know? Some other services came along that supplied services to people who have WordPress sites, and they did really well. [Dan Norris](#) in particular did well with his service that got bought out by GoDaddy. But what I'm seeing now is a lot of people are using platforms that have got pre-done themes and templates. But even more than that, they've got pre-done funnels and pathways.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** And you can basically just push a wizard button, and it will install all of the pages you need to have a business, which is critically important, because you don't get that out of the box with the WordPress installation.

**Greg:** No, and people don't want to be held hostage to a website developer. And I totally get that. So yeah, the way we design is, we don't care which platform it's for, like, we're a design business more so than anything. We just hire developers, because our clients wanted a one stop shop, you know? But we just want to be able to provide design so our clients get a better result, and make it easy for them. So if they choose a page builder platform, because it's easier, and they're going to get a better result, it's plug and play, but they still need good design, well, we can provide those designs for them to plug into those platforms themselves, or we could recommend one of our developing partners, you know?

## The platform that's a game-changer

**James:** Right. So, I mean, one that comes to mind is [10XPRO](#).

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** A huge portion of my listenership are using 10XPRO now.

**Greg:** Yeah, I love it.

**James:** I've been raving on about it. Like, I think it's in every second sentence and people are probably sick of me saying it.

**Greg:** I love it, too.

**James:** I'm such a fan. I mean, it originally started out probably 10 years ago, and it was built on a very robust code platform, and it was designed to make funnels easy. And then it got membership and course enhancements. So it's like the best of breed if you wanted something that can do the things. Like, the products out there in the marketplace that people used to use instead might have been ClickFunnels or Kajabi or Kartra. This just rolls all of those things in. And now you don't need your LearnDash or WooCommerce or external shopping carts. It does all the things you need; you just bring along your own email service provider, like [ActiveCampaign](#) or [Ontraport](#) or Infusionsoft, and plug it in.

Now, my question is, if you have 10XPRO and you use the wizard and you install all the pages you need, right, sales page, the thank you page, the upsell page, the membership thing, all of those things...

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** Can you enhance the design of what the pre-done templates come as?

**Greg:** Yeah. And this is why we love 10XPRO, because, like, you can't do that in ClickFunnels or those other type of funnel builders. Like, they're so limiting to what you can and can't do. You have to give about five fonts, and you know, everything has to be in really boring blocks. But with 10XPRO, you know, we can go in, we can design anything we like and then we can go in and custom code. Not we, like as in, you know, my team, but one of our development partners can go in and customize the actual CSS code so that it can be a fully custom, you know, unique brand to your business. It doesn't have to look like a template. But yes, you know, you can get a whole funnel out of the box, but then we can come in and enhance that funnel.

**James:** Right. That's really very interesting.

I heard a rumor that you might have actually designed the new 10XPRO homepage.

**Greg:** Yes, you're right. What do you think of that design?

**James:** It's beautiful. I've had a look at it. I was asked my opinion. And I will say this. It's actually the first time I've looked at a design template from you guys, where I really didn't have much comment to change.

**Greg:** Nice.

**James:** And not because I'm picky or fussy. I'm actually not. But usually there's one thing or two things that I have a sensitivity to just because I've got really deep knowledge of the customer. And it was just straight up awesome. So anyway, go over to [10XPRO.io](https://10XPRO.io), have a look at Greg's team's design work there. So you've been doing a few 10XPRO installations now?

**Greg:** We have, yeah, and membership sites, the works. So yeah, I think our customers love it because it's so easy. And yeah, we love designing and just providing the design. Because we don't like the headache of coding, right? So we would rather just provide the design, which is what we're really good at, and we've been doing for you know, many years now. And then yeah, hand it to the client through our developing partners as a live, functional, you know, plug and play, marketing funnel on steroids, essentially.

**James:** And I believe the person who has the account can choose whether they want to replicate the design themselves, or whether they want to get help from any number of service providers. And I like there's a whole community of service providers now swirling around this product, making it easy. Because I think the customer shouldn't have to do that part. Whether using WordPress or 10XPRO, you shouldn't be hands on with the tools, you know, as I should never be doing my own design. Clearly, get help. Get help, and get it done.

So if you happen to have that tool, you can have customization of the design. And I think, like, this is very clever for you as a business, where you've become agnostic as to the platform people are using. And I also like that you're not trying really hard to do development side. The coding side is a really different kettle of fish than the design side, right?

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** You guys are just kickass design specialists.

**Greg:** That's right. We never want to be coders.

**James:** And I describe it as like, best in the world.

**Greg:** Thanks, man. Yeah, well, we do, we keep on top of design trends, and you know, we're constantly pushing the team and educating the team. And yeah, we want to be the world's best, there's no doubt about it.

## Hands-on or hands-off?

**James:** So when it comes to your management of the design business, clearly you have design strengths. I know your wife also has incredible skills and talents when it comes to design. How do you manage the sort of hands-on, hands-off part of growing scale? Because you have a significant business now. I don't need to reveal numbers or whatever, but let's just say you have a seven-figure strong business. But you can't do every single part of every single project. How do you manage that team from a leadership perspective in which parts to do yourself and which parts to have someone else do?

**Greg:** Yeah. I'd say step one is hire a mentor. I don't know where you'd find one of them, but...

**James:** I'm going to have to try harder.

**Greg:** But look, it's just been five years of step-by-step learning, you know, having challenges and then asking for help and implementing and learning from that, and then, you know, putting in a hierarchy of a team. So it's not a huge hierarchy – we just have, like, a design manager, we have a VA, and then we have all the design team, right? And they do work in little groups as well, like, you know, they connect more with some designers than others. So they'll give feedback amongst themselves as well. And so really, my role is just to, you know, build the relationships with the clients and bring the business in the door. And even on that side, I've got somebody else helping me do that as well. And she's a really good website strategist. And yeah, she's based in the Gold Coast, and it's just been awesome for my business. Hello, Suellen, if you're listening.

And yeah, so my role is really just to bring the business in and then the briefs get fed into the design team, the design managers review the briefs, and we have a really good briefing process as well. It's really a detailed questionnaire, and then a call with a client, and then all that gets recorded and fit into the design team. So then the design manager reviews that with the designer, and I don't have to get involved.

I do have one request from the design team, and that is they do the initial, you know, homepage or whatever the first design is, and they send it amongst each other. And once they all approve it, then it'll just get added to our Slack channel for me to review. And then if I've got any changes, I'll just let them know. But if not, it'll just get sent to the client. So that's the only time I have to get involved again, in that entire project. So I don't get involved from that point for the rest of the pages. If I'm happy with the first page, then it just goes, you know, straight to the client, and the client gives feedback until the project's finished, and we offer unlimited revisions. So yeah, it's a pretty smooth process where I don't need to get involved. I don't need to count the amount of revisions or any of that silly stuff, you know?

**James:** And you've also got a package where people can have ongoing needs met?

**Greg:** Yes, [DesignerOnTap.com](https://designerontap.com). Yeah, absolutely. So that's really for you know, digital agencies or businesses that have a lot of ongoing need. And you know, there are a lot of competitors out there in that space. But where we're different is we offer conversion-focused website design. Most of the competitors just are much cheaper, but they don't offer, you know, the website piece. So yeah, it's pretty good. And yeah, we have quite a few clients that have used that and it's on tap. So they either jump in for a couple of months and pile up all the briefs and jump out and jump back in when they need us. But it's really up to them. You know, there's no contracts.

**James:** Yeah, the conversion part's kind of important, isn't it, if you're in anything that actually matters in terms of direct response? Remember, when we were bringing in your design and Brian's copy with my webmaster, we had to just finesse around a few times. We'd put the words and the colors and get it all lined up, and then Brian would say, okay, it's too much of a space here. And then you might say, well, this color's hard to read. And then between the three of us, we got to the point where we created something special. I'm sure at this moment, there's many versions of my sales page being replicated on the internet. Happens every time.

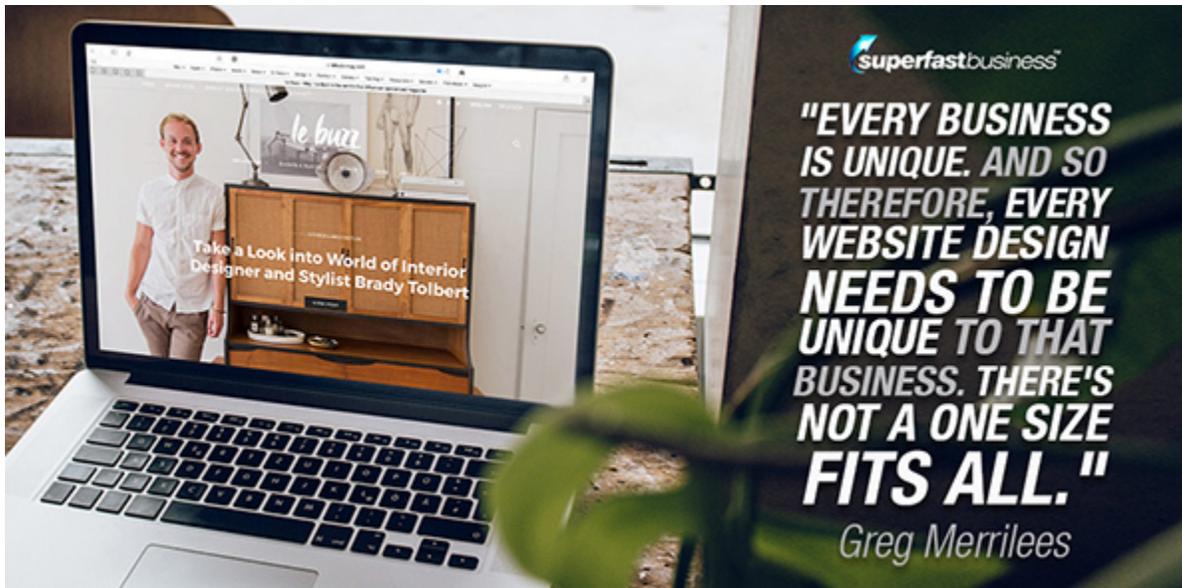
**Greg:** Doesn't it?

**James:** Yeah. We'll have to go and search or put it through a copy checker and send people polite requests to do something a little more original.

**Greg:** Yeah.

## What a designer should consider

**James:** Every time it cracks me up. But I'm the prime beneficiary for the outcome from that. I think what some people miss when they're doing that is the context. For people to come to that page first, they will have probably listened to a bunch of podcasts or seen a stack of videos. So they're already a long way down the journey. And as a designer, you need to take that into account, don't you? Like, where have they come from, and what are they doing on this page? And where does it fit within the whole journey, rather than just in isolation? And that's probably what the conversion element brings to the table.



**Greg:** That's right. Yeah, we need to cater to cold, warm and hot traffic. And really, that's what a homepage should be designed to do, to help segment that traffic as well. But yeah, there's a lot that goes into a web page or a funnel or a landing page or a, you know, full website that needs to take all those things into consideration. Every business is unique. And so therefore, every website design needs to be unique to that business. There's not a one size fits all. That's why I have a problem with templates.

**James:** Gotcha. And the interesting thing is, after you delivered the website, you know, you were very interested in us sharing the heat maps, the click tracking, you know, how far people scroll down the page. You wanted to know that information so we could make adjustments.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** And that's a critical part of it, where it's not enough just to go live. That's the start, really.

**Greg:** Yes.

**James:** It's then, how do you make those refinements and improvements? And what I think you're doing really well is you're getting that data from all of your clients. And that all goes into the next design?

**Greg:** That's right.

**James:** Like, you and I, we've learned things, particular things, and I won't share the secrets. But we've learned specifically around video players and calls to action with video players and which ones work well, which ones bomb. We also know about how far people are likely to scroll using certain different elements on the page. And you know, these insights are very valuable once you accumulate that knowledge base, which I think it's great where you're having a look at the project before it gets sent off for final approval, because you're going to pull it up at that point if you see one of those red flags.



**Greg:** That's right. Absolutely. And so yeah, when we start a website design project, you know, the more information a client can give to us based on their analytics, you know, the heat maps or the sales figures, anything that is the metrics around all the user behavior is gold for us. And then yeah, websites are never finished. So you want to put things like Hotjar on your site, which there's a free version or a paid version, which is not very much at all. Well worth it. And then you can track these things. And yeah, so really our goal, like, after we've delivered a website, you know, we've got an automation follow-up process to make sure the website's performing well, and if not, let's jump on a call and figure out why. But if they've got Hotjar, if we can have access to their analytics, and we can help improve it even more.

## Some networking tips

**James:** Right. On a different topic, while we're here, like one of the key promotion channels for you has been to be a brilliant networker. Apart from being a heck of a nice person, you've got a real knack for getting yourself mentioned, you know, being in the right place at the right time. Have you got any tips for business owners who are trying to up their game in terms of connecting with people who they perceive to be helpful to them in their business? Like, reflecting back on our journey, you were a complete stranger to me, an outsider, and you just got into my world. And then, you know, we've just continued that journey together. I think when you search for your name on my site, it comes up so many times. You get a lot of mentions and I think part of it's because you're always making comments, you're always listening to everything, you're giving feedback. You even have chased me down in the past when I haven't published enough episodes, and asked me if I'm okay. But what sort of advice have you got for someone who could learn from what you've been able to achieve there?



**Greg:** Yeah, well, you know, when I was younger, like I've always been the type of person to pay people compliments and things like that. Now, when I was younger, people would say, oh, you're such a suck, you know, you suck up and all that. But that's not what I'm doing. I just find positives and things. And so what I do when I'm communicating with people is always looking for those positives and to give people positive feedback. And to me, I don't know, that goes a long way and also I lead with everyone. I never ask for anything in return. I just, it's a whole [reciprocity principle](#). You just give, give, give, and it comes back. I mean, you know, karma, in my opinion, rules the universe and I live by that rule. So I just, yeah, deliver as much value as possible.

## Getting a mentor

**James:** And you said before, and I know you were being a little bit cheeky, but it is probably relevant. You said [get a mentor](#), and it kind of rolled out of your mouth pretty easily. But for some people, that will be a huge challenge, like to stump up some cash and to invest in themselves is frightening. They may not have that much cash, maybe they have ego holding them back. Maybe they feel like they should know all the answers themselves. Has it been hard for you to hand over some of the reins a little bit and say, look, I just want help, what should I do? And have you found it challenging or confronting at times through that journey of growing your business?

**Greg:** No, I don't think so. I've tried to keep an open mind to it all, because I had a really big why, you know, being out of work and mortgage and even my wife was in the clothing industry and she lost her job as well. So I knew that something had to change. So I left the ego behind. And I did look for the free option first, which was podcast, and that can help enormously, you know? Just this podcast alone, you get a ton of value with those 600-odd episodes, 700 nearly. But yeah.

**James:** Have you listened to most of them now?

**Greg:** Oh yeah, totally. Yeah. I've listened to a few of them more than once.

**James:** I've met one person who tells me he's listened to every single podcast episode on [SuperFastBusiness](#).

**Greg:** Yeah, yeah, I definitely have. And look, podcast is my main source of learning. I love podcasts and audiobooks, but I prefer that over you know, physical reading books, but just because, you know, you can be walking, you can do something else at the same time. But yeah, I don't know. I just found, once you find the right mentor, I think it's totally worth the investment. And yeah, once you start seeing results, then why leave?

**James:** You had a different mentor before I worked with you, and what would cause you to change, like, what were you looking for that was different and why you stuck with me for so long?

**Greg:** Yeah, well, I kind of outgrew them and look, they were good, but at the same time, they pivoted a little bit as well, and we didn't need each other at that point, you know? I mean, I was designing for all their stuff and for all their clients as well, and you know, it was a really good kind of relationship, but then, yeah, they did pivot. And yeah, at that time, I hadn't really pivoted out of what I was trying to get out of enough. And that's when I was, you know, listening to your podcast and then decided, Okay, this guy, I think I align more with these guys than I did with those other guys. And obviously, you know, [Ezra](#) was more on the ecommerce space, and you were in the service business more so than anything. So that's why I went with you.

**James:** Ezra's has been a great client for you as well.

**Greg:** Oh, yeah.

**James:** Of many years. And he's certainly been a busy boy.

**Greg:** Yes, absolutely.

**James:** Lots of energy there. It's been great to see, like, him, you and myself. We've all come a long way since the first episode of [ThinkActGet](#), that's for sure.

**Greg:** Yeah, yeah.

## How confident is Greg these days?

**James:** And you know, life's really interesting about it. And I wanted to put aside some time and talk to you about your journey, and you know, the business of website design. How confident are you in this era of the online world, the podcasting space, the expert, author, speaker market, the website platforms, with your business now compared to 10 years ago?

**Greg:** Well, you know, I still get nervous when I speak onstage and things like that, you know, doing videos and webinars, but I still do it, because it's good to push myself out of my comfort zone, right? But yeah, I mean, you know, my business looks totally different these days. And I will do all of those things, and I'll do them relentlessly, because it really helps my business. So yeah, like you were saying before, it's investing in yourself. And that's one thing that you know, I think it's good to get out of your comfort zone and just constantly push yourself to become, you know, a better person and better in business, and better in life as well. Like, have a good balance on life and not work too much. Once you've got an established business, that is.

**James:** That's fantastic.

## The low-hanging fruit

Alright, so let's finish up with some design tips. If we're a business owner, we've got a website on whatever platform, and we've either never had design done for us or are thinking about it, what would be the low hanging fruit? What things are the 80/20 that you should focus on? If you want to start investing, where do you start?



**Greg:** Yeah. So first off, realize that your customer is the hero, not your business, right? So that just means, when somebody lands on your site, they're not interested in you. They may be – it depends what marketing you've done offline. But generally speaking, cold visitors are not interested in you, they only care about what's in it for them. So you need to look at your website in the eyes of your visitors. And you need to lead with value and you need to back up your claims with social proof and have testimonials or case studies and things like that. And then you're positioning those people that you're helping as the hero and your business is essentially the guide.

**James:** Right. So we're talking about the website here and not so much the [logo](#).

**Greg:** Sorry, yes, beg your pardon. Yeah. Okay. So you're asking as far as a logo.

**James:** By the way, I loved your answer. That's still perfectly relevant.

**Greg:** Cool:

**James:** Like, that's a zoomed out view.

**Greg:** Yes.

**James:** As we're coming into all your material, have that frame. Great. So now we're on the material. First-time business owners, often they go and get a business card and a logo – that's like, often their number one expense.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** Which is maybe not the best one.

**Greg:** No. Well, look, I agree. I mean, nobody cares about your logo, right? Like I said, they only care about what's in it for them. So the first thing you should do is [find an offer that converts](#). Put up a template, whatever the case is. Just test your offer. Send paid traffic to it, send social traffic to it, send traffic to it in general and yeah, just find something that works before you amplify that and invest in design or copy or whatever. But if you did all that stuff at the start, invest in copy and design, then you probably get a better result, only if you're not selling a piece of crap.

**James:** Yes, it's a chicken and an egg thing. But if you can get an offer that convert, i.e. some words that are compelling, that have people keen to invest with you, you can reinvest that back into improving that machine, which is essentially what I did. In fact, aside from doing the copy and the new website design, you've encouraged me to get new pictures as well. Like, you're looking at this from a total brand perspective. And, you know, we updated the whole picture library.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** Which then gets used across every podcast I do as a guest. It gets used in my bios, it gets put on pages and stuff that we create from now on, like the quotable-type things on [Instagram](#) and so forth. So that really came from a design perspective of getting the right look and feel for my brand. And then it extended across all of our material.

So I guess the end goal is that all your material from logo through to your end deliverable product has a consistent look and feel that is, you know, high converting, that makes the customer feel great, that you're proud of as well.

**Greg:** Yeah, and I think that's important. You want to be proud of it, you know? And obviously, you need to update your photos every, I would say, three years on average, because you don't want to look like that, you know, like you're misleading people, like the young person you used to look like years ago. Some people, it's funny, you know, they might have a picture of themselves on their social and then you meet them in person and say, woah, you don't look like that. I think Ken's a good example, isn't he?

**James:** Ah, yes, Ken. His picture is definitely misleading. Oh, the first time, I mean, he's the first guy I met from a forum way back. This is probably 2006 or 2007. And I went to meet him in a coffee shop in Mossman. And I was there, but he wasn't there. There was just some older guy in the corner. And I looked again, I'm like, I think that's actually him. And he'd been using a picture from like, 20 years before when he was in some trade show business working for the American consulate in Sydney. And I asked, Ken? He goes, Yeah. I said, All right. That's a good one. This is like a dating nightmare. It worked out good. He's a tremendous fellow, and he's running the Sydney meetups and he does crowd control engineering at the [SuperFastBusiness Live](#) events. He's been such a great friend over all these years. But his picture, he was definitely using the marketing angle there, going for the useful branding.

**Greg:** I love it. Pictures and video as well, I think, are super important. You know, you don't need a video on every page; you probably should have a video on most sales pages though. And you know, there's one framework that you taught me, James, which is which is [SPIN Selling](#) based on the book by Neil Rackham. You know, letting people know the situation, the problem, the implication, and the need in a one-to-two-minute video can be super powerful.

**James:** Yeah, it's a good tip. I mean, [video](#)'s stronger than ever.

**Greg:** Yeah.

## Before the actual marketing

**James:** And also the pre-marketing stuff. The stuff that brings people to your ecosystem should be extended. I noticed when we switched on our camera for this call today, but we were recording audio, you had a really nice backdrop there. You can see the design elements coming through. And people look at those things. It's just the look and feel of every element can add up to create the sum of brilliance.

**Greg:** Yeah, I couldn't agree more.

**James:** Very good tips.

**Greg:** And we purposely did that. It was a bit of an investment getting the bookshelf, and then my wife doing all the interior design stuff. But yeah, I get so many good comments, and straightaway, because you know, most of our clients are overseas and my first point of contact with them is on video, on a video Zoom call. So yeah, if I can impress them from the word go, yeah, just helps position myself as a more of an authority.

**James:** This guy came yesterday to my house to check the fire alarm thing, you know, the smoke detectors?

**Greg:** Yeah, yeah.

**James:** And he looks at my bookshelf. And he goes, oh, wow. It's really pretty. They're all lined up by color. He goes, did you just buy the books to line them up to look like that? I'm like, mate, there's 3000 books there. At even \$10 a book, that's a very expensive way to design a bookshelf.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** I said, no, I've accumulated these books since I was like, 12 years old.

**Greg:** And lawyers do that. They have photos of themselves in front of their bookshelf to show they've, you know...

**James:** That they have knowledge.

**Greg:** Yes.

**James:** That they read, you know, big heavy thick volumes. Like, absolutely. We've used some of those images in my own portfolio, because the photographer was drawn to it. He's like, wow.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** It's amazing though. There are some haters out there who don't like color-arranged books.

**Greg:** Really? Really?

**James:** Oh, yeah.

**Greg:** Wow.

**James:** Oh, yeah. Blew me away. They're like, seriously, that's how you arrange your books?

**Greg:** Oh, my God.

**James:** I'm like, No, I would have spent, like, 20 hours to arrange them just like that for that one photo, and then I put them all back the way they should be, you know, alphabetically.

**Greg:** Love it. It's funny what some people think. Anyway. Yeah. Cool.

**James:** Okay. Well, Greg, great to catch up as always.

**Greg:** Yeah.

**James:** At least, not only do you get a mention in this podcast episode, but you are the feature.

**Greg:** Thank you, James.

**James:** That must feel good.

**Greg:** It does feel very good. I love this podcast and everything that you've put together over the years. And yeah, you've helped my business enormously. So yeah, forever grateful. Thank you.

**James:** And I hope you'll continue to send me feedback on each of the episodes.

**Greg:** Definitely.

**James:** Which ones you like, which ones, you know, I should do more of. Because whether people realize it or not, I think you've been part of the steering committee on what sort of content goes on the show based on performance and critical review. So thank you.

**Greg:** Cool, man. Yeah, a pleasure. And thanks for letting me do the webinar for the SuperFastBusiness community. So yeah, I think they get a ton of value out of that. The thread in there, the comments is like three pages long.

**James:** Oh, yeah, just like, members of SuperFastBusiness got to submit their sites for review. Greg showed them exactly what he would change to make them convert better. And we had some really, really good feedback from that. That's [inside the membership](#) for members of SuperFastBusiness.

So this is Episode 695. We've been talking about the business of website design with Greg Merrilees from [Studio1Design.com](https://www.studio1design.com). If you want to see Greg's design handiwork head, over to [SuperFastBusiness.com](https://www.superfastbusiness.com). That's Greg Merrilees' original. And so is [SilverCircle.com](https://www.silvercircle.com), and you can check it out. My [logo on the podcast](#) you're listening to now is designed from Greg as well. So I'm tremendously grateful to have a Greg in my life. Thank you, Greg, and I'll speak to you in a future episode.

**Greg:** Thank you, James.



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