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# Canadian Interior Designer Diana Bastone Going Strong 30 Years into the Industry

How the 14-time Best of Houzz winner keeps the inspiration flowing and pays it forward.

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Diana Bastone's love for interior design started when she was a young girl. Her mother, who frequently redecorated their home, sought her daughter's opinion every step along the design process. "Do you like this wallpaper? Do you like this tile?", her mother would ask. "I liked helping her," Bastone says. Then, in school Bastone quickly found her passion for drawing. "I felt that this actually morphed into me liking design because I am able to sketch an idea," she says.

Today, the award-winning interior designer from Ontario, Canada is three decades into her design journey, with more than half that time spent running her own business Diana Bastone Designs, where she is the principal designer. Here, she shares tips for

finding your niche, using business software to capture design inspirations from your team, and finding fresh ideas no matter how long you have been a design professional.



### Try on Many Hats

Early in her career, Bastone worked for a large design firm, then went to a medium-sized one before joining a small one. Each business brought her a different perspective. And while she dabbled a bit in commercial design, Bastone knew early on that residential interior design was the place for her. Working for larger firms helped her sharpen her design skills, but did not teach her all that she needed to know. "I happened to like residential, but in residential and working at the different design firms, I felt that they didn't teach enough business: About how to run your business."

It was while working for a small company, where she learned to do multiple things and play multiple roles. "If you want to run a business, staying with a small firm does allow you to wear many hats," she says.



### Know When You Need Help

Starting off as a sole proprietor, Bastone did everything on her own when she had just a handful of projects to execute. But as her business grew, Bastone quickly realized she could not do it alone. As she expanded her team, she also sought a business software to run her company more efficiently. She is a long time user of Houzz Pro for interior designers, her all in one software for staying organized, doing things more efficiently and collaborating with ease. "It's when my team grew, and the number of clients grew that I felt I needed something that was organized," she says.

We were able to use the program even if they were working remotely in their own home," she says of her team. With Houzz Pro "my bookkeeper can log into it and I don't have to meet her or send her things," she says. "It's very user friendly," she says. "I like this one-stop shop. I don't have to call different organizations for different things for my business."



### Make it Easy to Collaborate from Anywhere

Today, hybrid work is everywhere, and in her business, Bastone provides her team the tools to share inspiring project ideas no matter where they are. "We don't work every day together in the office," she says. When they do get together, everyone has already partnered together in collaboration. The team has already contributed concepts, product choices, fixtures and furnishings to the Mood Boards they create with Houzz Pro, for example.

This optimizes the creative process, not just for the team, but also for Bastone. "When I have some time I look at what they uploaded and I comment," she says. "I'm collaborating even without having to speak to them and I can see everything all in front of me with Mood Boards, and it has the prices on there so I already know what the room budget is going to be," she says.



### Build Trust with Clients

With a long, glowing track record, Bastone acquires most of her clients through referrals, but she knows she still needs to win their confidence to get a yes. It starts with her profile on Houzz, and her website which she keeps fresh and updated with a portfolio of past projects and client reviews, she says. With 14 Best of Houzz awards highlighted prominently on her website, Bastone says the recognition for superior design and customer service adds to the credibility of her work.

"Also, the trust comes with knowing that they can, at any time, call any of my references. There's a lot of very nice references coming from Houzz," she says. "I think that builds confidence."

Bastone also demonstrates to clients that she has done her homework. "I always say to the client that before I even start designing, there's a lot that I have to get to know about you," she says. She gives them a questionnaire and follows up with questions to fully understand their preferences, tastes and lifestyle. "I believe that's how trust builds," she says. "Often when we come to present our packages, they're so shocked and surprised at how we got them. That was because we did the research."



### Incorporate Your Signature Style

Bastone often presents clients with a concept she calls “quiet luxury.” This approach leans more toward the design she sees on social media that is incorporated in American homes. It is less formal than some of the preferences she observes in her home country. “The American style is more casual, but a level up. It’s not just casual, but you could see that there’s luxury there, but done in a casual way,” she says.

“I try to encourage my clients that they don’t have to have a formal dining area,” she says. “Let’s just have a really nice kitchen eating area and make it more casual, but with the right furniture and fabrics it can have a luxurious appearance. I see the vibe a little different in that respect.”



## Embrace New Approaches

The variety in the types of work you can do attracts Bastone to the field of interior design. "I'm glad it's a type of industry where I'm not doing the same thing every day," she says. "There could be one day or two days I'm working in construction and something to do with drawings and construction, and then the next day I might be going into furniture stores and selecting fabrics for drapery," she says. "I love the variety. I'm meeting new people all the time."

The risk of being in business for a long time is letting the work become routine, but having interesting projects keeps the design voyage fresh. "It can be repetitive, even though it's a different home with a different style, the process is the same and whatnot, but sometimes a client will bring something that's challenging," she says.

Her current clients are doing just that, she says. They live in a large and stylish home and their two dogs are a key part of their family, she says. Their four-legged friends have become the muse for the design. She is designing the home to reflect the crucial role the dogs play in their lives, she says. "We designed cabinets that had their crates built into the cabinet. We did an island that had the eating space within the island," she says. "The mudroom has a wash station and a place for their coats."

These types of projects keep her work fresh and new, she says. "This is the project I am really enjoying right now."



## Give Back

While Bastone is still going strong in the industry, she thinks about ways she can leave the field a better place when she eventually retires. "I want to leave this industry knowing that I was respected in the industry because I value what I brought to this industry with my knowledge, and how I believe I've serviced my clients," she says.



### Company

She also manages through mentorship. "I don't just say do this for me or do that for me. I tell them why. It's always about why you should do this, why you should follow up with an email, why everything has to be documented. I really try to mentor."

Bastone also seeks to build confidence in her team members and teach them some of things she did not know when she was younger. "I actually love to hear when they go on their own. I think that that's paying it forward," she says. "I hope that whoever works for me, they've learned good habits, and they carry on in this industry," she says. "I hope whomever's in my realm, who's around me, that I pass that on to the good that can come out of having a good designer."

Learn how Houzz Pro business software can become your one-stop shop for running your interior design business.