

# Understanding the Business of Designers

Conducted exclusively for members of:

Research Institute for  
Cooking & Kitchen Intelligence

***RICKI:** Helping kitchen-related businesses  
make smarter decisions and better products by  
delivering actionable insights.*

April 2019



Images: <https://www.jacobsendesign.com/>

**KITCHEN BY:**  
Lauren Jacobsen  
Best of Houzz 2014, 2015, 2016,  
2017, 2018 and 2019  
Lauren Jacobsen Interior Design  
Toluca Lake, CA



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(FOR THE FULL REPORT)



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# Objectives & Methodology

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- **GOAL:** The goal of the *Understanding the Business of Designers* study is to explore the sales and marketing efforts of designers and dealers and determine how manufacturers might help them grow their businesses or make their jobs easier.
- **METHODOLOGY:**
  - 251 designers and dealers across the United States who signed up to be on RICKI's proprietary professional panel
  - Conducted online from March 13<sup>th</sup> to March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019
  - Took approximately 10 minutes to complete
- **NOTE:** Statistically significant differences are noted at the 90% confidence level. When comparing segments of designers, segments with significantly higher results are highlighted either with a **green** arrow or circle or, in the headline or other text on the page. If there is no notation, there are no meaningful differences.



**BOTH KITCHENS BY:**  
Timothy Benkowski, CMKBD  
timothy j kitchen and bath, inc.  
Milwaukee, WI



# Designers' Approach to Business

# Designers Spend Close to Half a Typical Week Designing

## Admin Tasks Least Favorite Job

*During a typical week, about what percentage of your time do you spend doing each of these tasks?*

### MEAN PERCENT OF TIME SPENT ON TASK IN DESIGNERS' TYPICAL WEEK:

Designing	<b>43%</b>
Administrative tasks	<b>21%</b>
Sales or marketing	<b>19%</b>
Product ordering	<b>17%</b>

- Asked which activity they like least, six in ten designers (59%) name administrative work – three times that of other work-related activities (20% sales or marketing, 17% product ordering, and 4% designing).
- The only stand-out by segment: Independent designers are significantly more likely than their counterparts to say sales and marketing as the task they like least (30% vs. 19% Arch/D/B, 16% showroom, and 13% HI store designers).

# Most Important to Growing Business: Sharp Sales Staff, Testimonials & Portfolio



Please rate the importance of the following to marketing your business and generating sales.

## 'VERY' IMPORTANT TO GROWING BUSINESS:



NOTE: Excludes 'don't use' responses from percentages.

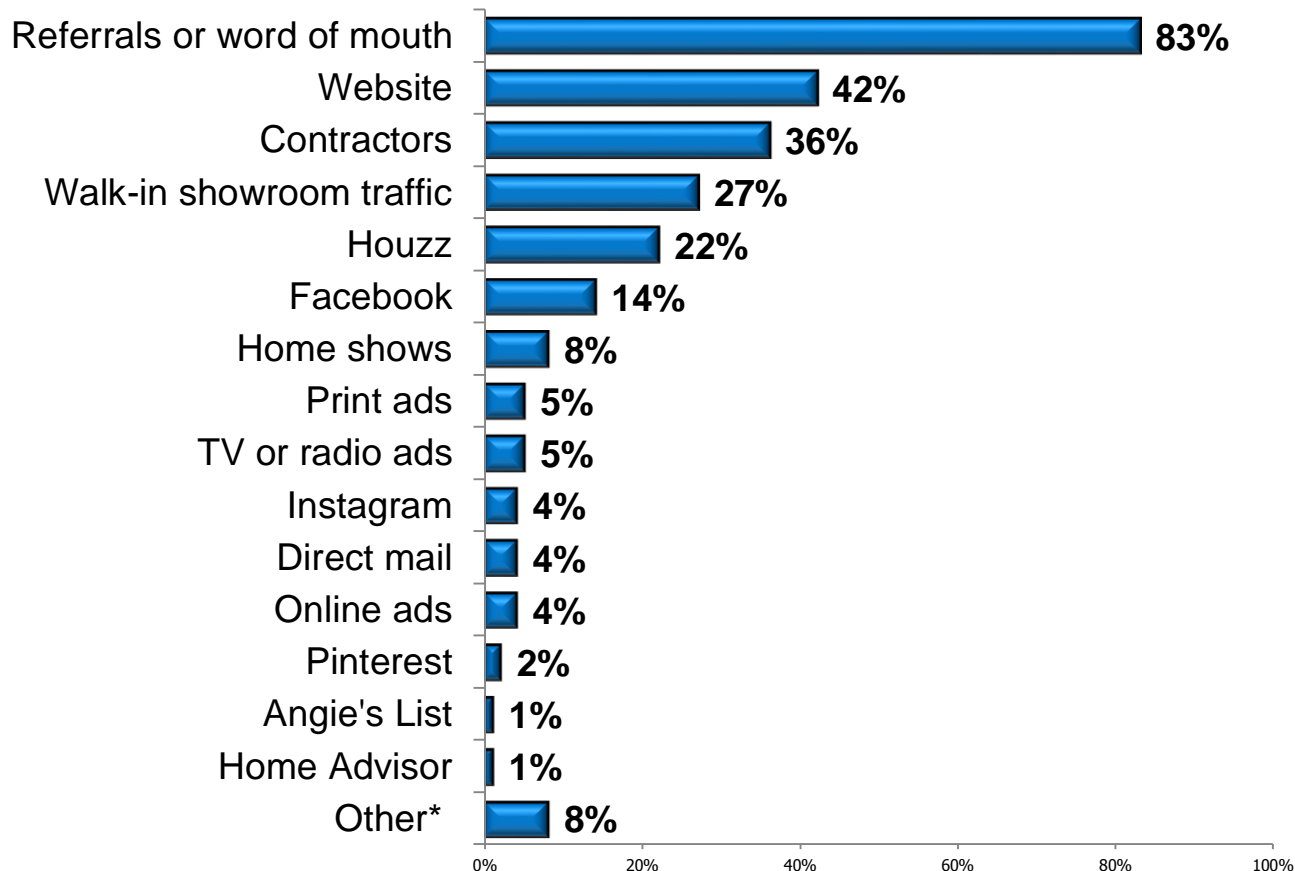
SOURCE: RICKI – *Understanding the Business of Designers* – 2019

# Twice as Many Designers Say Best Source for Sales Leads is Referrals vs. 2<sup>nd</sup> Best Source



Now we want to talk about which marketing tactics work best for your business. Which of the following are your best sources for sales leads? Pick up to three.

## BEST SOURCE FOR SALES LEADS:

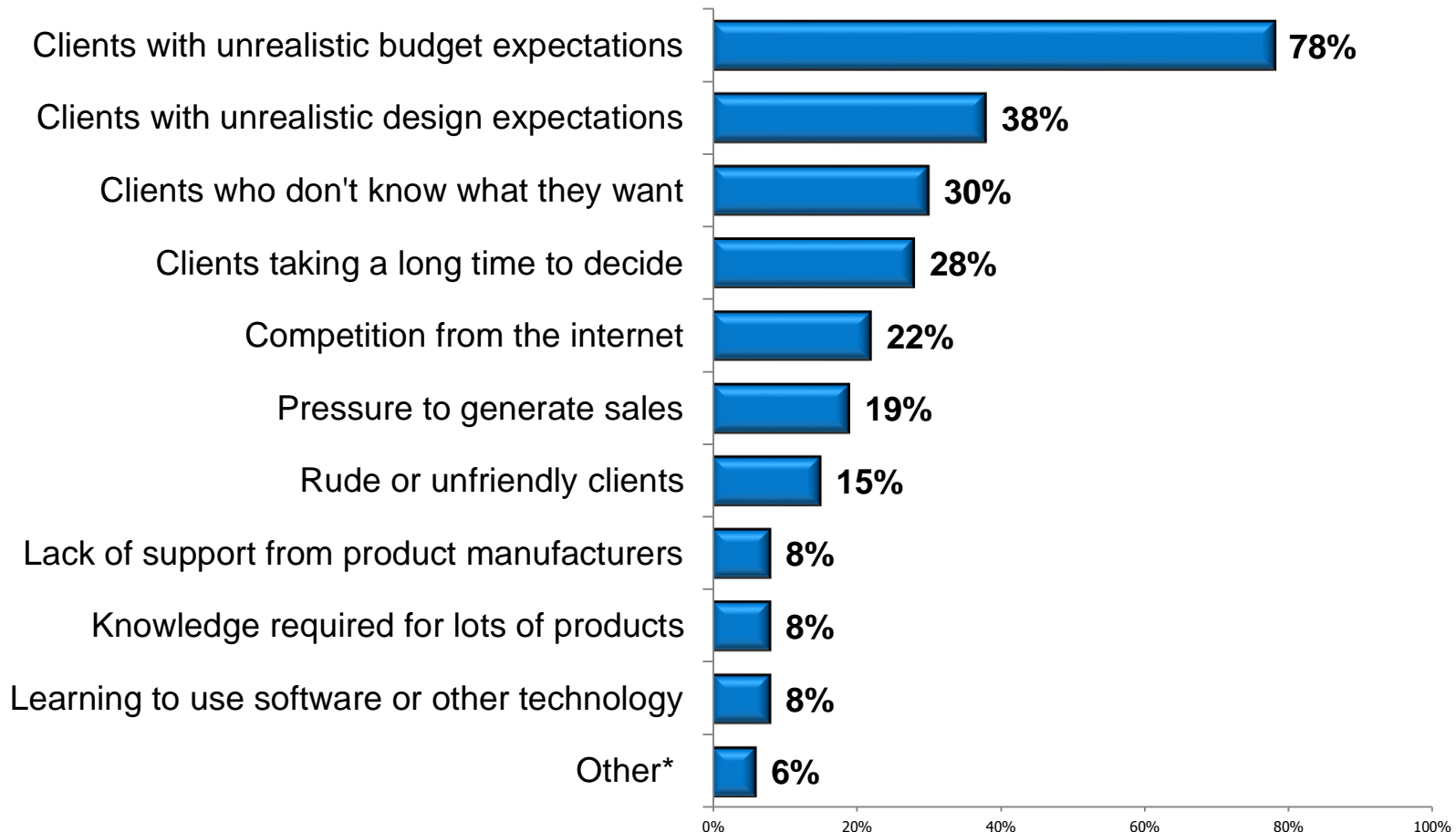


\* While Twitter was listed, no designer chose it. Google ads (5 written in by designers), suppliers (3), and (1 each) Constant Contact, email, networking, open houses, Porch, seminars in showroom, truck signage, and Yelp. Fewer than one percent chose 'don't know' best source for sales leads.

# Most Challenging About Sales Process: Unrealistic Budgets (Same #1 for All Designer Segments)

Which of these do you find most challenging about the sales process? Check up to three.

## MOST CHALLENGING ABOUT SALES PROCESS:



\* Most designers who wrote a response in the 'other' field talk about "time" (8 designers), from "time taken for initial consult" and follow up to "wait time from contractors" to "unrealistic time expectations from clients." Two designers each wrote in estimating/pricing and finding construction workers as most challenging.





**KITCHEN BY:**  
**Maria Stapperfenne**  
**CMKBD, CLIPP**  
**Tewksbury Kitchens & Baths**  
**Oldwick, NJ**



Images: Freddie Reed Photography

# Ways Manufacturers Can Help

# 2 in 3 Want Quality Samples from Manufacturers #1 Across All Segments of Designers



*Now think about different ways manufacturers might be able to help your business. How interested would you be in the following types of marketing support from a manufacturer?*

<u>TYPE OF SUPPORT:</u>	<b>'EXTREMELY' OR 'VERY' INTERESTED</b>	<b>'EXTREMELY' INTERESTED</b>
<b>Quality samples</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Trend information</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Quality brochures</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Names of prospects in your area</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Market research</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Content for your marketing efforts</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Assistance with social media efforts</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Help with customer relationship marketing</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Assistance with your website</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Direct marketing targeting area prospects</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>18%</b>

# What Else Manufacturers Can Do to Help Designers Grow Business or Ease Burdens



*Tell us one other thing we should convey to manufacturers of kitchen and bath products that they might do to help you grow your business or make your life better. OPEN END*

More quality printed brochures

Showroom updates

Samples

Show differentiation of brands

Marketing/Promotions

Improve communications

More training/Education

Ship faster/Shorter lead times

Improve manufacturers' websites

Stop selling direct online

Focus on quality control

NOTE: Words or phrases appearing more frequently in the responses of designers in the study are represented by larger font sizes. Shown are those common themes mentioned by three or more designers.



**BOTH KITCHENS BY:**  
Cynthia Scheuer  
CGP, CAPS  
Dragonfly Design Studios  
Lehigh Acres, FL



# 4-Point RICKI Recap

# 4-Point Recap

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- #1 Knowledge is King for Generating Sales – But So are Samples, Software and Referrals.** Almost all designers and dealers (92%) say a knowledgeable sales staff is critical to generating sales. And more than eight in 10 cite design software and manufacturers' samples as very important sales tools for generating business. And the best source for sales leads, in the view of eight in 10, is referrals – far more powerful than other sources measured including contractors, their company website, social media sites, showroom traffic, and other sources of leads.
- #2 Some Marketing Budgets Rise. Majority Actively Doing Digital.** One in three designers and dealers increased their marketing budgets over last year's. Some of those funds went to digital marketing, with close to six in 10 either using digital marketing exclusively (20%) or actively trying to add digital to the mix (37%). The key obstacles to using digital methods more is the time it takes to implement and a lack of skills required.
- #3 Tough Days Indeed.** The biggest challenge faced by the industry is clients with unrealistic budget expectations. Almost eight in 10 say this is the most challenging aspect of the sales process, far more than any other obstacles measured. Also, more than three in four say customers are more demanding, more knowledgeable, and more price sensitive than they were five years ago. Combined with greater competition for business, these all come together to make for some stress-filled days at work.
- #4 But Here's How Manufacturers Can Help, According to Designers and Dealers:**
1. Provide more quality samples (#1 type of marketing support desired by far) - more samples, quicker when new products are introduced and at low or no cost. After samples, designers and dealers want more high-quality, up-to-date brochures and trend information most.
  2. Focus attention, if possible, on the biggest gaps between what most designers want from manufacturers and how well manufacturers deliver: qualified leads and content for their marketing show the biggest gaps.
  3. Designers spend nearly half of a typical week designing client spaces, but administrative tasks take a significant amount of their time, so any way to minimize admin work will be appreciated.
  4. Improve your outreach to designers and dealers and treat them as partners. As one bluntly put it, "Stay in contact if you want your product sold." Their preferred ways of hearing from you is email and personal calls or visits from sales reps.

# About RICKI

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- The Research Institute for Cooking & Kitchen Intelligence (RICKI) is an independent organization to help kitchen-related businesses make smarter decisions and better products by using a wide range of research methodologies to deliver actionable insights.
- RICKI was founded by a group of professional market researchers with vast experience in putting data to work to build brands and drive sales. The Executive Director of RICKI spent 18 years in the home improvement industry and was a former president and board member of one of the leading associations for the overall home improvement sector, the Home Improvement Research Institute (HIRI).
- The research conducted by RICKI goes beyond traditional research methodologies to help members gain a better understanding of the mindset of today's consumers by delving deeper into motivations and emotional drivers to pinpoint trends that will impact member companies into the future.

## To find out more about RICKI:

[www.kitchentrends.org](http://www.kitchentrends.org)

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