

'I'VE BEEN ABLE TO BUILD UP A REALLY GOOD DATABASE OF PEOPLE TO PITCH PROJECTS TO'

make media WORK FOR YOU

Story: Gabrielle Chariton

Want to share your work with the world? *Housing* takes a look at how getting your projects showcased in print and online media can drive big marketing results on a small budget.

Today's home-focused consumers have access to unprecedented amounts of information and inspiration for their housing projects: in magazines, on television, newspapers, blogs and their social media feeds. They turn to the media to educate themselves about the building and renovating processes, and often, by the time they reach any buying decisions, will have a clear idea of what they want from their project, how they'd like it to look, and which builder/designer they'd like to work with.

As a housing professional, it's important to find a way to become part of this multimedia housing conversation – to have your work and your brand featured in the pages and online platforms that consumers are trawling for inspiration.

Wondering where to begin? *Housing* spoke with representatives from three businesses that are regularly featured in Australian home magazines, and have a strong online presence, about the strategies they use to get their work and brand in front of the buying public.

Brisbane-based **Darren James Interiors** is an editorial fixture in a range of local and national

consumer publications, including *Queensland Homes*, *Brisbane News*, *Style*, *Home Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, *Inside Out* and *Real Living* – as well as *Housing*. Co-founder and manager Elissa Greer has taken a highly proactive approach to securing this coverage ever since the business started winning industry awards in the late 2000s.

'Look at your project, how the home is styled and whether it fits the magazine'

'I did a media release and a pitch to every single magazine, small and large, even newspapers. A few of them picked up on it and I still have contacts with those same writers today,' she says. 'Over time, I've been able to build up a really good database of people to pitch projects to. Now that [the different publications] are familiar with our style of work, they sometimes come to us requesting things like images for a kitchen showcase or a project that might fit with an article they're planning.'

Placement in the national magazines is highly competitive – most publish only 12 issues a year,



Elissa Greer, Darren James Interiors co-founder and manager



Photo courtesy Jasmine McClelland Design

pitching for success

- Before you pitch to a magazine, call them and find out what email address to send it to, and if they have submission guidelines. For home blogs and websites such as *Interiors Addict*, *Houzz* or *The Design Files*, check the 'contact' section to find out how to submit your work.
- Your pitch should include several photographs (low-res files are fine) along with a brief description of the project – where it is located, who designed and built it, and what makes it special.
- Blogs and newspapers require fresh content daily or weekly, which makes them an easier target when pitching. Newspapers also have the benefit of a local readership.

but receive thousands of submissions every week. Elissa says you can improve your chances by aiming your pitch at the right publication: 'Look at your project, how the home is styled and whether it fits the magazine you're pitching it to. You wouldn't pitch a country style kitchen to *Belle* magazine, for example.' (See box for more pitching tips.)

For other businesses, such as Tasmanian builders **Skookom**, media attention springs from success at industry awards. Co-owner Elise Simondson says that winning national GreenSmart awards led to a flurry of media coverage in *The Mercury*, *realestate.com.au*, *houzz.com.au*, and magazines *Green* and *Sanctuary*. This increased visibility, she says, has 'built our brand significantly through recognition of the sustainable energy efficiency side to our business. We have attracted a lot more enquiries from architects from Tasmania and the mainland, and from people who are interested in passive housing'.

Interiors projects by **Jasmine McClelland Design** have been gracing the pages of *Inside Out*, *Home Beautiful* and interiors blog *The Design Files* ever since the beautifully styled images on its website caught the eye of a freelance photographer. Owner Jasmine McClelland says that media exposure has delivered multiple benefits: 'Quite a few people have seen one of my projects in *Inside Out* and looked me up as a result. And when my clients see their home in a magazine, they get



Photo courtesy Skookom

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excited about it, they tell all their friends – so in that way it also strengthens referrals.'

For this reason, she stresses the importance of maximising and extending the benefits of any media exposure by noisily sharing it with your social media followers and email database.

In fact, social media platforms in themselves have become powerful promotional tools for housing professionals, and if you're not successful in generating external press coverage (or you're simply not inclined to chase it), it's still possible to showcase your work and make meaningful connections with motivated buyers online.

Elissa Greer uses Instagram Stories, for example, to control Darren James Interiors' brand image. >



Skookom co-owners Elise and Ian Simondson



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Photo courtesy Jasmine McClelland Design



Photo courtesy Skookom

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'While we promote ourselves as high-end and sophisticated, we still believe our brand needs to be approachable. To do this we post stories to showcase the real people behind our brand – what we're doing onsite, or out and about at industry events. It helps our clients get to know our team.'

Pinterest – a platform for users to browse and save images for project or general inspiration – she adds, 'can drive a lot of traffic back to your website, which really helps to generate leads. We focus on creating inspirational boards and pin a lot of our own work to bring people back to our website.' (See pp 100-101 for more on Pinterest.)

Noisily share [media exposure] with your social media followers and email database

Elise Simondson has had success promoting Skookom on Houzz. 'It's been a great platform to showcase our work and post client reviews. It's a great space to gain more exposure and genuine credibility.'

At the end of the day, any interaction with the public – be it in the local paper, a design blog or through your own social media pages – will work to strengthen your brand and bring potential clients knocking. 'We find that clients might need several touchpoints before they come to us,' Elissa Greer explains. 'They'll see us in a magazine, they'll like a post on Instagram, they hear people talking about us. It's a collective approach, [and] we have to be across all those various mediums.'

www.darrenjames.com.au

www.skookom.com.au

www.jasminemcclellanddesign.com.au 

'WHEN MY CLIENTS SEE THEIR HOME IN A MAGAZINE, THEY GET EXCITED ABOUT IT, THEY TELL ALL THEIR FRIENDS'



Jasmine McClelland, owner of Jasmine McClelland Design