

Innovation

When Technology Meets Design: Clippings Co-Founder Q+A

Entrepreneur Tom Mallory shares his thoughts on how technology is transforming the interior design industry.



When entrepreneurs Tom Mallory and Adel Zakout started their e-commerce business in 2014, the interior design world hadn't yet faced the level of digital disruption seen in other industries. Architects and designers are now spending more time than they'd like working on administrative tasks and less on the creative work they love. Enter [Clippings](#).

The pair who met at architecture school initially set out to create a site that featured a unique, curated collection of up-and-coming furniture brands that were struggling with marketing and distribution. But, they quickly found a gap where technology had not yet caught up.

Today, Clippings is also a software that helps [architects and designers](#) simplify their product sourcing process, from inspiration to managing delivery and installation. Co-founder Tom Mallory sat down with 360 to share how his company – and technology, in general – is disrupting the interior design world.

360: How did you grow your business from an e-commerce site featuring up-and-coming designers to the end-to-end trade platform it is today?

Tom Mallory: When we started Clippings, our curation of brands couldn't be found elsewhere. After some time, we started getting quote requests from interior designers and architects. We started learning more about trade customers and realized what a huge impact technology could have. Championing emerging brands is still important to us from the supply side of our business; but from the demand side, that was our "aha moment." We quickly focused our energy on creating an amazing experience for this target customer.

We spent a lot of time with interior designers and architects, understanding all the pain points of their user journey and where technology might offer solutions. Today Clippings offers value whether you want to get inspired, manage projects, collaborate with your team, review budget or organize logistics.

"Fundamentally, we believe that living around inspiring and thoughtfully designed spaces leads to a better and more fulfilling life."

TOM MALLORY | Co-Founder, Clippings.com

360: On your website you say you're "using technology to revolutionize the interior design industry." Can you explain how you're doing that?

TM: Today's interior design industry is fragmented, inefficient and hasn't started to fully leverage the opportunities technology provides. We're creating a powerful digital platform to disrupt the industry by providing a far better experience for its customers. We've aggregated and unified the data of products across the industry and built tools for interior designers and architects to utilize throughout the entire inspiration to installation process. While we are technologists first, we are also keen to offer a human touch. Every user has access to our team of account managers – the majority of whom are former interior designers, architects or furniture professionals – and we regularly catch up with our community through our events.

360: What drives you and your team every day?

TM: We believe in the value of good design. Changing the way furniture is specified and distributed, driving efficiency and giving better access to quality design will make this industry bigger. Fundamentally, we believe that living around inspiring and thoughtfully designed spaces leads to a better and more fulfilling life.



360: You and Adel both have a background in architecture. Did that help you practice design thinking, always keeping the end-user in mind?

TM: Yes, I think so. Both of our fathers were architects and we've lived in the design world all of our lives, so this has definitely had a major impact on how we've built Clippings and businesses before. I'm a big fan of user-centric design. The starting point should always be the user experience, and you work back from there.

360: The furniture industry is a multi-billion dollar one, but only about six percent of that is spent online. Meanwhile, your business has grown more than 400 percent every year since it started. It's now the UK's largest online source for furniture and lighting. How were you able to disrupt such an established industry?

TM: Winning over the established furniture brands was especially difficult at the beginning. When we started, the only online companies that delved into the design world were flash sales sites, many of which had promised one thing and delivered another. This heavily devalued brands that had been building their reputation for decades. In the first years, it was a matter of knocking on doors and convincing people that we were different, that we ultimately wanted to build something that would positively impact and change the industry.

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360: Emerging technology – take augmented reality, for example – is increasingly playing a bigger role in our industry. Where do you see that trend going?

TM: Once we get to wider adoption, I think there will be some really interesting applications that AR and VR (virtual reality) can offer, specifically within interior design. I think VR is especially interesting. It might offer a tool that changes the way designers create physical spaces, but also how consumers engage with products in the sales process – negating the need for physical showrooms. In the longer term, as people spend more and more time in virtual spaces, VR also has the potential to create a whole new digital interior design market. The technology isn't there today, so we aren't quite at the tipping point yet. But, it will be interesting to see what happens when virtual spaces become a real alternative as engaging places to work.



Tom Mallory is the co-founder of [Clippings.com](https://clippings.com). He studied architecture, design, film and screenwriting, while also working on creative start-ups in his spare time. Growing up surrounded by beautiful furniture and spaces inspired Tom to work on companies that communicate the value of great design. He previously co-founded OpenBuildings, a resource for learning about architecture, which has millions of downloads. Today, he focuses on [Clippings.com](https://clippings.com), the all-in-one platform to deliver interior design projects. For interior designers and architects, Clippings combines powerful technology with dedicated experts, enabling them to discover thousands of brands, manage their product schedules and buy everything in one place.

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