



SPI 229

Tips for Building a Simple and Effective Website and Brand with Jess Catorc

August 31, 2016

Pat: This is the Smart Passive Income Podcast with Pat Flynn session number 229. Let's do it.

Announcer: Welcome to the Smart Passive Income Podcast, where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. Now your host: he slept with a stuffed Smurf until he was 10 years old: Pat Flynn.

Pat: What's up everybody? Thank you so much for joining me today in session 229 of the Smart Passive Income Podcast. Really excited to share an amazing guest with you today, somebody who blew my mind and the minds of many other people who watched her video asking to come on the show and provide value for you today.

Before I share that audio clip ... Of course the video is available at the show notes at smartpassiveincome.com/229. Before that, I just want to say I get about a dozen people every single day who request to come on this show. I'm absolutely honored by that and it reminds me of the early days when I had to go out and really hunt and find people to come on the show.

Now it's the other way around and I'm saying no a lot, which initially was hard for me to do, but it's very easy when I consider the three things that I take into account when it comes to who comes on the show. The first thing is "Is this somebody who can provide value to you: the listener?"

Is there some sort of transformation that they're going to help you go through so that, by the end of listening to the episode, you're a different person, you have something in hand, something in mind that you can take with you and, moving forward into your business, implement it and see success? That's the first thing. The second thing is often times it starts with a relationship that I have with this person already or through a friend.

With this guest, that did not happen actually. I didn't know Jess beforehand. Number three is also just the way that they ask. They have to not necessarily blow my mind, but it just has to

be considerate, it has to be something that makes sense, and something that obviously takes into account that I'm a busy person. A lot of people send essays' worth of text in an email, and I just don't have the time to read that.

What Jess did is she sent me a video. I ripped out the audio for you to listen to so that you don't have to go and watch the video right now. You'll get an idea of who she is, what she's all about, and just how awesome she is. Then we'll go right straight into the interview. Of course, like I said, that video is available at [smartpassiveincome.com/session229](http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session229). Without further ado, I'd love to introduce you to Jess Catorc. Here she is.

Jess:

Hi, Pat. I'm Jess. I know you must get a lot of emails, so I figured this short video might be a nice way to introduce myself and hey, maybe a bit more interesting. A while ago I had let you know how much I loved SPI. In fact, I've been listening to it since I started my business. I grew up in a small northern town in Canada and from a young age I always knew I wanted to run my own business.

Just like you, I am an only child and I was always encouraged to follow my dreams, so I did. At 12 years old, I discovered my passion for computers and, without even realizing it, I was soon teaching myself HTML coding and building websites. Side note: yes, that is a backwards visor. It was a thing.

Fast forward many years and I now run a business where I can work from anywhere and support my family by being with them when I need to. That business? You guessed it. I teach entrepreneurs how to make their own websites. I can tell you though, Pat, none of that would have happened without the help of SPI.

Episode 145? Thanks to that, my tips are now featured in Entrepreneur, The Huffington Post, and the Female Entrepreneur Association. Episode 203? I'm now running workshops at Google Campus in London teaching entrepreneurs how to create simple and effective websites. Finally do you remember episode 110?

Listening to that and going through your tutorial, I've now also launched a podcast with a guest lineup including Lisa Nichols, Michelle Gielan, Pam Slim, and your good friend: Amy Porterfield. I should add all of this happened by the time I was 24 years old. I've honestly learned so much from you and I can't tell you how much I appreciate the work that you're doing.

I wanted to reach out to you because I would love to be able to share my tips with the SPI community on making a website for their business. I've seen my method help so many of my own students gain success and it would be an honor to speak about with you on the show. Regardless of if you'd like to speak with me or not, I just hope you know how much you've helped me with my business and how grateful I am.

I hope you have a great week. Pat, I wish you all the best. Sincerely, Jess. Hey, Pat. Thank you so much for watching the video until the very end. If you think I'd be a good fit for SPI, I would love to hear from you, so please leave me a message below and have a good day. See you.

Pat: Jess, what's up? Welcome to the Smart Passive Income Podcast. Thank you for being here.

Jess: Thanks, Pat. So excited to be here.

Pat: Everybody just listened to and I recommend they watch the video that you created which got you on the show and a lot more other things too. I'm looking at the video online right now. At least on Facebook, there's over 14,000 views, 50 comments, almost 100 shares. This is a video of you just sharing how awesome you are, not in a cheesy, cocky kind of way, but in a way that really made me and other people get behind you to come on the show. Where did you even get this idea to do a video like that?

Jess: Thank you. Yeah, honestly the response was just insane. I have to say thank you to you as well. You responded, I think, in six hours or something. I just got the notification when you commented. I've

always been drawn to video, even in school. I did a flash-mob video for my mom's birthday one year, so it was definitely a natural thing for me to try out. I know you get, I think, 400 emails every single day.

Pat: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Jess: So I knew that I had to be a bit creative in how I was going to reach out to you. Video was a given. Then I just tried to find a unique way to reach out. I know you've got a fun, kind of quirky personality, so I tried to incorporate that in the video as well. Then just released it.

Pat: It was perfect. Did you hire somebody else to do that for you or did you do that all yourself?

Jess: The video was professionally filmed. I hired a videographer, but all the editing and everything was done by me.

Pat: Okay, but you didn't hire this videographer specifically for this purpose? Or did you?

Jess: It was a bit of both. That video was actually done when I was doing my workshop at Google Campus, then I said to him ahead of time ... I was like, "Look, I want you to come to record it, but there's kind of a random thing that I want to do at the end of it." He's like, "Okay."

I was like, "Do you know Smart Passive Income?" He's like, "Yeah." I was like, "Okay. This is going to be crazy, but I want to do a video pitch and send it to him," so I had everything scripted. I had all of the different scenes that I wanted to do. It was kind of combined in both, if that makes sense.

Pat: Yeah, that's awesome.

Jess: It was just really fun.

Pat: It was like the coolest thing I'd ever seen. Thank you so much for taking the time to do that. Happy to have you on the show. It's going to be interesting to see how people who want to be on the show later end up pitching because, if they just send an email, I'm going

to be like, “Hey, you know what? My audience is stepping it up in terms of how they’re asking. Check out this video. Try again.”

Maybe not. I don’t know, but you set the bar really high. I just want to, again, thank you for that. I think everybody enjoyed listening to it. I, again, recommend everybody go to the show notes, watch it. Jess is awesome. I didn’t bring her on just because she created a great video. She has a lot of great content to share.

We’re going to talk a lot about building simple and effective websites today, which obviously is very important for all of us. Before that, Jess, I just wanted to get to know you a little bit and have you share your story. How did you get to where you’re at today in teaching websites?

Jess: Yeah. It’s actually kind of funny. I started when I was 12. That’s when we got our first proper computer. Do you remember that old, scratchy dial-up connection?

Pat: Yeah.

Jess: ... we used to have way back in the day.

Pat: Like 14.4 (dial-up internet sound) like that whole thing?

Jess: Exactly.

Pat: Yeah.

Jess: Yeah. Just like you, I’m an only child, so I had a lot of free time on my hands, so I ended up playing on this virtual pet website called Neopets. You could play games with your pet, you could feed it, you could take it shopping, but one of the elements of that website was you could create your pet its own page.

I didn’t realize it at the time. To me it just seemed like a game as well, but I was actually learning basic HTML coding. What it was for me, it was like, “Okay, if I want to create this page, if I want to change the colors or add an image, I entered this line of text and

then I got a different result on the page.”

That’s genuinely how I started. From there, that’s what sparked my interest in web design. I’ve been doing it ever since really. Throughout school any class that had to do with computers or design, I was in it. Any homework assignments that, if I could do a website or a video, going back to that as well, I tried to do it, and then ended up getting a certificate in digital media.

I moved to Australia and I just started to work there. I was working on different digital media projects, but then the company I was working for at the time, they asked me to learn this thing called Wordpress. I thought, just with my extensive background in web design and basically being a computer nerd, I was like, “No worries.”

“Give me a couple of days. How hard can it be?” I’m sure you’ve got people probably laughing right now because ... I don’t know if you did this as well, Pat, but anyone that’s tried to teach themselves Wordpress with no guidance, the process isn’t always as easy as we think it’s going to be.

Pat: Yeah.

Jess: I basically ended up spending hours and hours on YouTube watching videos, reading books, going to workshops. The only way I can really describe that journey was it was like climbing this massive Wordpress mountain. Then when I finally looked back at all of the steps I took to get there, I realized something.

I think you’ve probably seen this as well. I, just like so many other people, we tend to take the scenic route and we learn so much more than we actually need to know. Then that just gets us feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. From there, I actually decided, “Okay. I’ll start designing Wordpress websites.” I was working with entrepreneurs one on one.

Then the more that I was working with them, I started to hear the same thing over and over and over again, and that was that they

were like, “Oh, thank goodness I found you. Tried to do it myself. What a nightmare. Glad someone else is doing this.” Then I started thinking and I kind of got this light bulb moment where I was like, “Why don’t I start a business and I can teach these people how easy it is?” That’s genuinely what I’ve been doing ever since.

Pat: That’s awesome. I love that. Obviously you’re serving a huge audience there in a very, very painful thing, which is, like you said, starting Wordpress sites. I remember when I first started back in 2008 and I was building a website that a lot of people know called intheleed.com which later became greenexamacademy.com. That was built all myself to serve the architecture industry.

I remember there was one day where I had like my first advertiser on the site who wanted to put a 150 by 150 pixel on the page. I put it on the page using a widget because I knew that was the easiest way to do that. They came back and they were like, “Hey, Pat. We love the ad. It looks great there, but can you move it to the other side of the page?”

I was like, “I don’t know how to do that.” Like you, I was on YouTube trying to become a JavaScript CSS expert. I got super frustrated. Long story short, my wife finally saw how frustrated I was and she just called a friend and was like, “Hey, Mel, I think can do that for you.” I was just like, “Fine. I’ll give him access to the site. He’ll figure it out.”

In like two minutes, he did it. Then the funny thing was he came back and he was like, “Hey, Pat, dude, I fixed it for you, but real quick who built your website because quite honestly the coding is terrible?” I was like, “Well, it was me. Thanks,” but that was kind of my first time knowing that this wasn’t easy. I then looked for other help out there.

It’s great that there’s help like yourself out there, Jess. Let’s talk about you creating your business. What was that like in terms of your mindset shift from, “Okay. I’m just in here doing websites for myself,” and “Now I’m going to serve other people and do it.” How

did you actually build your business from there?

Jess: What I started doing, the very first thing was ... It's interesting. When you start something, especially because I learned Wordpress myself, the things that I thought people wanted to learn were actually a lot different than what they wanted or how they phrased it. I actually got this from SPI. I did a survey. I would just go into group.

I said, "Hey, I'm not selling anything. I just want maybe 15, 20, 30 minutes of your time. I just want to give you questions and I want to hear what your experience is trying to teach yourself a website." That's actually how I started building not even my courses, but the content that I would deliver, how I worded things on my About page. That was the very beginning.

Then from that I started my online course and I got beta testers. These were people ... This was before I even released it. I could get their feedback. I could see from the very beginning, from starting with nothing to building a website what struggles and hurdles they face, and then tweaking it to match that. It was definitely ...

When you're a web designer it's really easy to kind of hide behind your business. I'm sure so many other people find this when they start: being the face of their business, it's definitely a mindset shift. You have to have a lot more self-confidence. You have to put yourself out there and not care what other people think. I think it's actually been the most rewarding thing.

Pat: That's really cool. This is great. You did the customer research right up front, so that took all the guess work out, which is fantastic. Then you launched your course. What platform were you using to launch your course?

Jess: I did it on Wordpress. I figured if I'm teaching people how to do their own websites, I should probably have it on there.

Pat: Okay. Did you use a plugin or something to help you manage that course?

- Jess: Yes.
- Pat: Which one was that?
- Jess: I used Zippy Courses.
- Pat: Okay. Zippy Courses.
- Jess: It's been ...
- Pat: Great.
- Jess: ... brilliant.
- Pat: That's Derek Halpern's software. We'll put the link in the show notes for everybody. Keep going.
- Jess: Yeah, definitely. What I did was, before then ... I was blogging. I was releasing free content. I had my e-book. I would release, and I had like a wait-list saying, "Hey, guys. Thank you so much for joining me on this. I'm going to be releasing my course soon. If you're interested, sign up here." Then what I did was I actually did, Jeff Walker style or David Siteman Garland: the three video series. Then that launched into the course.
- Pat: Very nice. That's great. When it comes to the launch of your course and the beta group and all that stuff, how many spots did you have available when you launched to the beta group?
- Jess: Originally I was just going to do 10 people, but the response was quite big when I said, "Hey, I'm looking for beta testers," so I ended up going to around 20. I actually would recommend ... I don't know if I would do more just because ... What I did first was I asked people to send me a list of questions or answers to my questions.
- It was really important that I found people that were genuinely just starting out, but also had the time and the commitment to go through the course and give feedback because I think a lot of the time you can get people that would love to do the course for free,

but timing wise they might not be able to do it or give you really good feedback. I probably wouldn't do more than 20. Then I had the survey at the end, anonymous so they could be very honest about what they wanted to say. Then I tweaked it from there.

Pat: What were some of the things that you read in the survey that were pretty massive that you learned?

Jess: It's funny. It was actually little things like audio. For my video, having the audio levels the same in the tutorials and the screen-cast because I had a professionally filmed intro video for each module. Little things like that. I was so focused on the content. Other things, I think this can apply to any course, is the length of your videos.

Rather than having a really long video, especially if you're doing a screen-cast, and having all of this amazing content in it, breaking it up into bite-size chunks, that was probably one of the biggest things. People were like, "I love what you're doing, but I want to be able to jump in, watch this video, do this one thing, get one result, go get my coffee, go do something, else, come back, and do the next thing." I think those were the biggest ones.

Pat: Define bite-size for us. How long is a video?

Jess: It really depends on what it is you're teaching. For me, bite-size could be from four minutes to up to 10, 15 minutes. I would say even 10 to 15 can be pushing it, especially if people are following steps back and forth. It depends on what it is that you're doing, but between that time frame was the best.

Pat: Awesome. Can you define what it is that you're teaching in your course? You hear web designer, somebody who's great at it, and I think initially a lot of people were thinking, "Well, Jess is creating an agency and she's getting people who want websites and she's building their websites for them," but it sounds like it's something different. Can you share with us what it is you're teaching in your course actually?

Jess: Definitely. Basically the focus and the goal of the course is for entrepreneurs that are completely starting out and they have no desire to become a web designer. That's not what I'm teaching. All it is is just the basic, fundamental steps that they need to take. This is from the survey, is that people were saying that they wanted to do it themselves, but they were so worried about it looking like a DIY website.

That's what I incorporated in it. I was like, "Okay. I can show you the steps on the technical side, but then I can also show you the branding and the things that I do for my own websites, how you can apply that and then you can make it look professional."

It's really just how to present yourself online, how to create consistency with your graphics, your designs, and then basic things like even how to protect your website or creating manual backup systems in place. Things that you don't need to know to become a web designer, but as an entrepreneur, especially if you're on a tight budget, they're things that are going to be able to help you to launch online.

Pat: Awesome. We'll get right into those things, but before that ... I know you listen to the Smart Passive Income Podcast. You had mentioned this in your video, of course, and you had mentioned a few episodes that were really helpful to you. You had mentioned episode 145, which was the one with Kimanzi. Can you talk about how you were able to take that information and how it was useful for you?

Jess: Definitely. Those are just a couple episodes. There are obviously a lot more. For those ones, the first one was when I was trying to pitch myself online to get to not online magazines, but online websites. That was my first focus because there's a lot of people who have a lot of knowledge and probably are doing the same thing as me.

I was like, "How do I get my message out there and gain some sort of credibility?" The first thing was getting really specific on the website that I wanted to approach, reading through all the articles that they

were publishing, and understanding the style, the format, the types of things that they published. Every single website is different.

You can have someone that says, “Okay. This is how you get published on all the major platforms,” but as an example with Huffington Post, when I submitted my first initial pitch, it was actually rejected because it was ... This is before I listened to the episode. ... it was very technical and it was very specific in all these different tips.

I started to read through all the things that they were actually publishing and it was a much more from an emotional side or the journey that you’re taking to get somewhere. I submitted another article, a completely different approach. Within a couple of hours, I got the email back from Arianna and she said, “Great. Let’s publish it.” Then Entrepreneur, as an example, they are technical. They want tips.

They want five ways to launch a website. It’s really just understanding what you’re trying to approach, who you’re trying to approach, and tailoring it specifically to them. That was the biggest thing for writing articles. The second one was for the workshop at Google Campus. Honestly, the biggest thing with that ... I’ve also got other speaking engagements like in Colorado coming up now.

Pat: Nice.

Jess: It was just ... Yeah, it’s really exciting. It’s just getting really ... Being confident isn’t the right word. It was just being able to communicate your message in an authentic way, not worrying necessarily on what other people are thinking, but how you can give value.

That was a big thing. Then last one: your interview with Tim Ferriss and also doing ... I highly recommend, anyone that wants to start their podcast, to do your podcast tutorial. I wish you could see my hard drive because all of my folders are formatted the way that you say.

Pat: Awesome.

Jess: Yeah. That was the biggest thing, was just getting started and then

reaching out to I'm not going to say influential people, but people that are well known that have their own following and that can give a lot of value to your show as well.

Pat: Beautiful. Awesome. So you have a podcast too.

Jess: Yes.

Pat: What's the name of the podcast?

Jess: Making the Entrepreneur.

Pat: Making the Entrepreneur.

Jess: That's not necessarily on the website, but it was just interviewing female entrepreneurs, getting tips. It's much more broad than just on the DIY website side.

Pat: Awesome. Thank you for sharing all that and for talking about the SPI Podcast. I know a lot of other people who have taken action, and I just wanted to make sure that people know that, when you take action, you get results on this stuff. Hopefully you'll be taking action on a lot of what we're about to say in regards to actually building your website, making it effective, branding, and all that sort of stuff.

I want to start with "What are some of the biggest mistakes that people are making out there when they're crafting their websites and they're trying to share their message and present themselves in a great way to build authority?" What are some of the biggest mistakes that people are making, and how can we overcome them?

Jess: The first thing is wanting to share so much on their homepage. This is to the point where I've actually created a free video on how to actually work out your homepage. Especially when you're starting out, you want to seem professional, you want to share with everyone all of your knowledge of everything that you've done so people take you seriously and they're going to want to learn more

about what it is that you're doing.

I've found that this actually has the reverse effect. I'm sure we've all come across a website where you go to it and you're just like, "I have no idea what I'm supposed to do, if this is even for me." They scroll through and you get a higher bounce rate because people just don't know what the purpose is of your site.

I know when you launched your new website design, you actually analyzed what people were doing on your homepage to see what it is that they were struggling with and how you can improve that. The first thing I would say, even if you're just starting out or you have a website now, is if you have an image banner, have a short sentence showing people what it is that you do and how you can help them.

An example: on my website I have "Websites made easy." It's very short it's not a long paragraph, but if people come to your site, they instantly know either, if they're on the right site, they're going to be interested or, if not, you filter them out and they go on their way.

The next thing is if you're blogging and you want to have your latest articles featured on your homepage, I think that's brilliant, but it should be an either/or. Either your homepage is focused just on your blog or your podcast or you have a list of the services or the things that you offer, rather than trying to blend everything all into one. that can just leave the page feeling a bit overwhelmed.

Then the third thing ... There's more tips, but the third thing would be think of some testimonials or some way that you can have social proof. If you've been published in larger websites or places that are specific to your target audience so they would see it or they would know what that place is, find a way to incorporate that on your site.

Lewis Howes has a great way of doing this with his logos of where he's been featured. Even if you have testimonials of people that have worked with you, just find a way that, when someone is on your site or on your homepage, they're like, "Oh, this person knows what they're talking about," and then they're going to want to learn more.

Pat: That's awesome, Jess. One of the things you mentioned earlier is trying to be professional. I just have to highlight again what you said there. A lot of times we do want to look professional because we want to be taken seriously, but we often take that too far and we create something where it doesn't reflect who we are.

I think that was one of the big things with my latest redesign was I felt like what was on my homepage ... If you go back into my archives of my history of themes, you'll see that more personality has been inserted into my website so that people understand who I am right away. How can people better brand themselves on their websites? This is something you do really well at jesscatorc.com.

That's Catorc with a C at the end because it's silent because it's French because I asked you that question before we got started. You can see obviously on your website it's very clear what it is that you do. I am just immediately drawn to your personality. I can kind of tell what kind of person you are immediately. How can we better do that on our websites online?

Jess: Definitely. First of all, thanks very much. This actually goes back ... I actually share this with people in my course. I show an older version of my website because it was not like that at all. This is actually what comes into play with branding. The first thing that I would say to do is ... This is going to sound really cheesy, but it resonates with me.

What I do is I start with a piece of paper and I draw a heart in the middle of the page. You want to think of that as truly the heart of your business. Then take some time to draw around that certain things that make you you, not necessarily from a business, so your unique selling point or the things that you offer, but things like colors that you like, brands that you resonate with, hobbies that you have.

For you, you could put singing or things like that. Just get really specific. Then what I say the next thing is you want to create a mood board. A mood board is really just a visual representation of the feeling that you want to evoke with your brand or your website. What it is is you can use things like Pinterest or Google Images.

Just find images that really resonate with you and reflect those core values that you wrote down. It might not seem to make sense right away, but when you do this step ... This is what I did with my new redesign to what you're seeing now. I had this idea of what I thought my brand and my website should look like.

When I actually did this for myself and I started to see a common ground of all of the things that I was collecting, you get much more clear on the brand and the tone that you want to use. Secondly ... I guess thirdly is don't be afraid to be you on your website. This is something I really struggled with before.

More so when I was doing it as a web designer because, for me ... You can look now on my website. It's pink. I really struggled with that because I thought, "Who is going to take a web designer in a pink dress seriously?" I thought I had to have it looking corporate and very serious and professional.

Other things is like if you have hobbies, don't be afraid to show that on your about page. I shared that I dance. That was another thing that I struggled with. I was like, "They're not going to think that I'm committed to web design. They're going to think I'm dancing every weekend or whatever." It actually has the reverse impact of what you think, so don't be afraid to show that.

There's so many different ways that you can do it, but I would say is get clear on a couple of key things that make you you, and then find ways to integrate that. You don't want to have all of your different hobbies and personalities on your site, but when you're clear on a few key things by doing all of those exercises, that's when I think the magic happens and when people start to really resonate with your brand.

Pat:

I love that. Obviously for people who have been to my site before they know that I do what I can to make sure that I am myself on my website, on my podcast too. Every show I have a little fun fact read about me from my voice-over guy: John Melley at the top of the show.

Jess: I love that.

Pat: Thank you. That's actually made a really, really big impact. I remember when I first started doing that. A lot of my other podcaster friends were like, "Why are you wasting your time? Nobody cares about that stuff," but actually they do. It's funny because when I go to conferences and stuff, those are the things, those little facts are things that people mention first.

They find the one that resonates with them and they talk about it with me like, "Oh, Pat, I'm also half-Filipino," or "Dude, I used to be a body-boarder too," or "Man, I'm also afraid of spiders," all these little things that, on the surface don't make sense, don't seem like they matter, but in the world of online business, the fact that it's online, the more human you are, the more likely you are to make one of those real connections, the more likely you are to build raving fans.

When it comes to the technical aspect of building a website, which I know is a struggle for a lot of people, what are your recommendations there? I think a lot of people, especially those who are going to start a website soon, they're a little bit intimidated, they might be procrastinating because of that. Do you recommend a specific host? Do you recommend getting a theme after that or making your own website yourself and HTML? How do you teach going about that?

Jess: The first thing, and I think it's actually a question that people have, is most people are wondering "Okay. What platform do I use to even build my website?" because there's things like Wix, Weebly, Squarespace, Wordpress. I do have to say that there's never going to be a right or a wrong way because this goes back to the procrastinating.

It's better to have a website than no website at all and spending hours trying to compare the pros and the cons of each one. I recommend Wordpress personally, the self-hosted version, not wordpress.com. The reason why I recommend it is think of your business, not yours, but anyone listening, in five or even 10 years' time.

The vision that you have for your business, chances are it's not going to be with a Wix or Weebly site. When you have wordpress.org, so you install it on your domain. You have so much more control. You're able to add all these different functions and it's completely up to you as to what you add. It's flexible, it can grow with your business, and, just like you found now with your new redesign, you can hire out.

When you're ready to move on and transition to maybe working with a developer or new designer, they can easily take what you already have and upgrade it, so you don't have to have these really crazy transfers if you're using Wix or Weebly, for example. The other thing is that, when you're hosting your website yourself, part of the control is that ... Let's say you've got your site on Squarespace or Wix.

If they close up in the morning, so does your website. I think as a business owner, the more control you have the better, so that's why I recommend it. Then definitely you want to find a hosting company. For anyone that's just starting out ... I don't know where I got this analogy from, but you want to think of your hosting company like your cyberspace landlord.

They basically manage this plot of land in cyberspace for you to build your website on it. It's actually kind of cool we both recommend the same hosting company, which is Bluehost. I think you've got a really good deal or a link for that as well. Personally, I recommend Bluehost because it's 24/7 live support.

This goes back to, if you think of your hosting company like your landlord, especially if you're starting out, if anything happens day or night ... Let's say you're working on your website at 2:00 in the morning and something breaks, just knowing that you can speak to a real person versus having to submit a support ticket, wait 48 hours to hear something, it honestly makes things so much easier.

Bluehost is recommended by Wordpress. You get a free domain with them, which is a bonus. That's just what I recommend. Again, there's no right or wrong answer. People can take the

time to compare them, but I've worked with several other hosting companies and hands down I just think Bluehost is the best.

Pat: Yeah. At the shared hosting option, which means it's going to be the cheapest, by far it's the best I feel. I've actually gone to their headquarters. I've met the team there, the CEO. I've had long chats. I know for a fact that they're doing whatever they can to be the best host out there. That's what I recommend. I have a deal, like you said.

If you go to smartpassiveincome.com/bluehost, you'll see a cheaper price than you can get on the main site. That's awesome. That's great. Now, when it comes to the theme, I know that's typically the next step for people. You go, you get website hosting, you get a theme. Is that what you teach or do you actually teach building your own site from scratch or something?

Jess: No, actually I would highly recommend themes. This is just, going back, because my audience are people that are just starting out, so they don't want to learn code, they have no interest in it. Anyone that's listening that's not familiar with what a theme is, it's ... I have really terrible analogies, Pat, but it's like the pre-designed room that you can find in Ikea.

It's like a pre-designed layout or template. It's what, in my opinion, makes your site look really nice, professional in a matter of minutes once you install it. There's a couple of different themes that are out there, and I know this kind of stumps people because they're going to come across ...

Especially if you're like me and you're looking through forums, you're going to see things like frameworks and parent themes and child themes. What I recommend for beginners is "Look for a parent theme." We can definitely go into the differences. A framework is just like a framework of your house; there's no fancy colors or design.

Most of the time a developer is going to take a framework, add their own code, and then create a parent theme. That's just the easiest thing to go for, is a parent theme. What I do recommend,

though, is when you're browsing you're going to see that there's free and premium themes. Premium meaning that you do have to pay for them.

There's different types. People have different opinions on this. I personally use and I recommend premium themes just because, when you're working ... Wordpress is open source, meaning that everyone has access to the code. If there's any security loopholes or vulnerabilities, they'll go through it, they'll fix it, and release an update. The same thing applies to the coding for themes.

When you invest in a premium theme, and most of the time they're going to be well under \$100, you're getting access to a developer that is going to be regularly updating their theme, which is important for the security of your website, and then you also have access to them if you have any questions. That is definitely a plus that you don't always get with a free theme.

Pat: Nice. Then with the parent theme, are there enough options to customize it? I think another big worry with getting a theme out there that everybody can get access to or pay for is that their website is going to be like somebody else's. Is that even anything to worry about? Is that something they should be concerned of?

Jess: There's two different things that you can do with this. If you're feeling adventurous, you can definitely customize things with CSS. That's where a child theme comes in. Most of the time a developer or a designer will create a child theme, they'll add some custom code to change the way the base theme looks, and then when you update your parent theme nothing gets effected.

What I would say is that the biggest thing is your website is not going to look the same if you go through the right branding steps and you create some really distinct visual designs. Let's say everyone has access to the same web theme or template where they have an image banner and they've got three sections that they can add in their own graphics; every graphic is going to be different, every style is going to be different, so I wouldn't be too worried

about that.

That being said though, if you want to really make something completely unique, I'd definitely check out Divi. It's a theme by Elegant Themes. It's an amazing theme. It's a drag and drop visual editor, so you can basically build it from the ground up and you still don't need to know code, so that's a nice kind of option as well.

Pat: Very cool. What's that theme called again?

Jess: It's Divi: D-I-V-I.

Pat: D-I-V-I. Okay. Awesome. Thank you. Thank you for that. You mentioned branding. For those just starting out and even for those who have a business already ... because often times branding becomes something that's just a Frankenstein job where, along the way, you're adding new things. I know this was the case for SPI for a while because all these different pieces started to be added on: the YouTube channel, Ask Pat, other parts, SPI TV.

It just all was different, so part of the major focus of the redesign was actually, "How do we make all of this coherent?" When people are looking at their brands, what are some exercises they could do? What are some things that they could do to make sure that the branding element is spot on? Why is that so key actually?

Jess: The most important thing with branding is, in my mind, it's consistency. There was a really great workshop I went to where a lady was actually ... She's a designer for Microsoft and she did all of their visual elements for their marketing campaign. What she did is, as an exercise, she gathered all of their different brochures and posters and she laid them out on the ground and she said, "Just look at them."

She's like, "Just by scanning your eyes or squinting your eyes and looking at them, can you easily distinguish who this company is or what brand this is?" That's just really important. Especially because there's so many different social media platforms, different things

that you can be doing online, you want it to be easy for people to spot out what it is that you're doing.

A couple of things. The first one is something as simple as choosing your colors. What I say is like, "When you're choosing your color scheme ..." Actually a great resource if you want to have help for picking out your colors is Design Seeds. I think it's design-seeds.com or .net. They have all these really great color combinations that you can choose from.

The first thing is choose one to two focus colors, so colors that you're going to use the most prominent on your website or within your design elements. Then think of two to three complementing colors. These are colors that you're not going to use everywhere, but they're literally going to just compliment the focus colors.

They're not competing for attention. I think for you Pat, your colors would definitely be red, and you've got some green as well, so when people see all the different things that you're doing, they're like, "Oh yeah, that looks like Pat." Even simple things like your ... I think you had said once on one of your episodes the "Hi, my name is Pat," sticker.

You had it on your backpack or something, and someone came up to you and they're like, "Oh yeah, I've been listening to your podcast." Just things like that where people can easily recognize what it is that you're doing. Then the other thing is fonts. A lot of people miss this step. They just kind of use whatever fonts happen to be on their computer or whatever they're using.

Get clear on "What is your main font? What is your heading font for you titles, even for your logo? Do you have a complimenting font?" Sometimes a lot of people use a cursive or a quirky looking font to add some contrast or depth. Just get really clear as to what you're using, when you're using it, and then anything that you're doing moving forward, it's always going to have that consistency.

Pat: Right. It's always much easier. I know that, when I speak, for

example, I use a lot of the same fonts on my slides. It just becomes overall something that's even just easier to do once you define what those things are. Like I said, most people go in without defining those things, so I'm glad you talked about that.

Finally what I wanted to talk about, which is something that isn't talked about very often, but it seems like it's something you cover in your course and I wanted to touch on this, that is website security backup. It's our business online; we want to keep it safe and not let anybody else in. What are some steps that we could all take to make sure that we have a secure website?

Jess: Yeah. Definitely. Okay. First of all, I have to share a story just to put things in perspective.

Pat: Uh-oh.

Jess: Yeah. This is probably within the first year, I'd say six months of when I was running my business. I was recording one of the modules for my course, and that was on how to install Wordpress. Granted it was like 2:00 in the morning; it was not exactly a prime time. Jess was a little bit tired.

Without even realizing it, I installed Wordpress on my main website. Basically that meant that, within a couple of seconds, I had wiped everything out and I had a fresh install of Wordpress on that domain. I really do not wish that feeling on anyone. But because I had backups I was able to get my site up in a matter of minutes.

That really put things in perspective for me because, had I not had that, that would have been months of works, hours and hours of time that I put in that was just completely gone and I wasn't guaranteed of getting it back. This is something that definitely a lot of people leave. They don't really consider it and they kind of just take it for granted. Always have a backup. This is even something for your email list.

Are you regularly backing up your email list? Just taking those extra

precautions should anything happen, you're always going to have something in place. I recommend ... This is a really great plugin. It's called Manage WP. There's so many other ones out there, but I just love what they're doing. There's other features within that like if you want to transfer your site from one domain to another.

They also have incredible ... Within work days, it's one hour response time I think for your support tickets. You can just create a regular, automatic backup. When you're doing this though, what I recommend ... If you're doing a daily backup, which I think is a really good idea, have more than one. Have at least three backups saved.

The reason is that, let's say you go on holiday or a trip and you have a backup and two days later you realize that your site is down or something happened to it, if you only have one backup in place, you're going to have the most up-to-date version, which is going to be that broken version of the site, backed up, so that doesn't really help. Have three if you can.

Also, rather than backing up your site just on your server with your hosting, have it saved to an external place like Drop Box and even potentially save it onto your hard drive because a lot of people will save backups on their server, but if your server, your hosting account gets hacked or your website gets hacked, it's really not very helpful having it there because you won't have access to it anyways.

Pat: Right. Right.

Jess: So that's definitely something to consider. Another thing, just for security, this goes back ... We didn't really talk about this, but with Bluehost you've got a one-click Wordpress install, which I recommend for anyone that's starting up that wants to get Wordpress installed easily.

What a lot of people will do is they'll go through this not really thinking because a lot of other hosting companies offer one-click install. The first thing is make sure you have the most up-to-date

version of Wordpress, but also your plugins and your themes as you go through creating your website.

Any security loopholes or vulnerabilities, if they're fixed and they have an update available, you want to ensure that you have that update there. The other thing is your username. This by default for a lot of one-click installs can be admin, your email, your first name. What I would say is ... I actually use a plugin called Security, and they monitor all of my websites. I'm not sure if you're using them as well, Pat.

Pat: Yep. They're great.

Jess: Yeah. I can't tell you how many times people have tried to hack into the backend of my site using my first name and my email. This is my personal email, not one that's publicly or easily available online. I think, if you can make your username difficult to guess, that's one extra hurdle that someone has to get to get into the backend. The other thing is having a strong password. That's a given. Letters, numbers, uppercase, lowercase. That as a whole is really important.

Pat: Totally. I also have a plugin called Limit Login Attempts, which will track how many people try to log into my Wordpress backend. It literally tracks hundreds of attempts a day, which is scary to think about.

Jess: Yes.

Pat: ... that people are trying to access my website like that, so super important to have a unique, interesting, hard to guess username and obviously password to go along with it. It's really important.

Jess: Definitely. I don't know if you've come across this, but there's also a really good plugin that I use. It's called Google Authenticator. I don't know if you have this in the States, but I live in the UK, and with your online banking a lot of time you can't just get in with your username and your password. The bank gives you this calculator and you enter a code and then you have to enter it on the website to actually get in.

With Google Authenticator, it's an app on your phone, even if someone has your username or your password, this app generates a code every 10 or 20 seconds and you have to enter it in to be able to get into the backend. That's another really cool thing that you can do. Even if someone does have access to your user name and your password, if they don't have your phone with that app, they still can't get it.

Pat: Can you connect that into the backend of your Wordpress site?

Jess: Yeah.

Pat: How do you do that?

Jess: I can share with you the link. It's called Google Authenticator. It's just a plugin that you add into your site. Then you download the app on your phone and then you link the site and you enter the code and it syncs everything up. Honestly, it's just been such a great thing to have. I don't know.

It just puts your mind at rest that even if, for whatever reason, someone finds your password or they override or they get it in three attempts, it doesn't matter because they still can't access it unless they have that specific code that was generated at the specific time when they tried to log in.

Pat: Right. That's awesome. I guess it's like a two-step verification ...

Jess: Yeah, exactly.

Pat: ... sort of sequence, which is what I do for all of my stuff as much as I can. Yes, it's a little bit of a hassle because there's an extra step, but imagine if somebody were to get access to those things including bank accounts, Paypal. I do two-step across the board because, like you said, it puts my mind at ease knowing that all of the secure things are there in place so I can continue to run my business without worrying about somebody hacking into my stuff, which has happened before.

I don't know if you remember this, Jess, but back in March of 2013 on a trip to San Francisco actually ... I brought Caleb, my videographer, and we were there to film some behind the scenes stuff for my book Let Go. It was while I was on that trip that my site got hacked. Everything was completely down. Not just that site, but all the sites that were on that server too. It actually wasn't with Bluehost. It was with a server that I upgraded to from Bluehost after I outgrew it. It was down for about a week and a half.

Jess: Wow.

Pat: I had calculated that it was probably a loss of about \$20,000 based on my normal affiliate incomes and that sort of thing. I actually recouped a little bit of that income through business insurance that I had, but quite honestly it took about six months to recoup about 10% of that. I was happy to get some back, but it was just a long process, such a headache, such a hassle.

We've since, obviously, put a lot of the security features in place to make sure that doesn't happen again or that it's, obviously, much harder. Yeah, website security, backups: all really important stuff. Finally, Jess, I want to just thank you for coming on the show, for sharing your wisdom here.

I think it's going to help a lot of people, especially those who are just starting out. It's a really inspirational story, so do you have any final tips for people out there, whether they are just starting out or have a business or a brand already? How can they really crush it online and stand out in the space that they're in?

Jess: I think the biggest thing, and I've learned this personally, is don't be afraid of being yourself and then going with that 110% because we tend to hold ourselves back and we doubt ourselves and we think everything needs to be perfect. I'd say the biggest thing is ...

Just like I said, even if you're listening to this episode and you've got a website on Wix or Squarespace or something, it's better to have something and then keep moving and keep progressing than

it is to hold yourself back and wait for everything to be good and then launch or then do the next step. I just think the biggest thing is just get clear on who you are and what it is that you want to bring and then go forward with that.

Pat: I love that. I think that speaks to everybody out there who's listening because we all have something that we want to do, but we just haven't done it yet. Please do that thing. The world needs you. They need your help in the way that you know how to provide it. Jess, thank you so much again for coming on. Where can people find out more about you?

Jess: Yeah, no, thank you so much, Pat. This has been awesome. I've actually created ... If you go to jesscatorc.com/SPI, this is only for SPI listeners. I got this idea from ... It was I believe one of the last episodes that you had on. Basically I've got a free DIY website mini-course. I'm also including an e-book. It's everything that I talked about, but it goes in depth with the different types of themes and everything that you can add to your site. It's jesscatorc.com/SPI.

Pat: How do you spell Jess Catorc?

Jess: It's Jess: J-E-S-S and then C-A-T-O-R-C, silent C.

Pat: [.com/SPI](http://jesscatorc.com/SPI).

Jess: Yeah, that's right.

Pat: Awesome. Thank you so much. We appreciate you, and all the best.

Jess: Thanks so much, Pat.

Pat: Awesome. I hope you enjoyed that interview with Jess Catorc. Again, that's Jess C-A-T-O-R-C. If you go to jesscatorc.com/SPI, you can get that free giveaway for you, which is awesome. I appreciate you all so much for listening in today. Thank you so much. I also want to give a big shout out to 99designs.com, today's sponsor, who's awesome because they've made massive improvements

over the years in helping you get the designs that you want from multiple designers.

What this means is, whatever you're doing: a logo, or a website design, a landing page, a logo for your soccer team, which I actually did through 99 Designs at one point ... You can have t-shirts designed. Whatever you want designed, you send the description of what you're looking for: the style and all that sort of stuff, and what's going to happen is, within days, you're going to have dozens of designers from all around the world competing for your favorite design.

By the end of it, you can select your favorite one. You can also get your audience or your family and your followers to vote on their favorites too so you can pick the right one. By the end of it, which is literally less than seven days, you'll have a design that you love. If you don't, you can get your money back.

I've used it recently to design an info-graphic. I'm going to be doing a little bit of that repurposing using 99designs.com because it's just super easy to use and it's really fun actually. If you want to check it out yourself, head over to 99designs.com/SPI and you can get \$99 free toward your next design project. Again, that's 99designs.com/SPI.

Thanks so much I appreciate you. I'm probably going to get a lot more people submitting requests to be here on the show. As you can see with Jess and what she did, you're going to have to step up your game a little bit. No, I'm just kidding. Well, maybe not. You've got to impress me. You've got to share a valuable story that I know is going to help the audience.

You've got to understand that I want to transform the listeners like many of you have been transformed by listening to the show. You can do the same thing. I often say, "Hey, if you want to make your goal being on the show, make it your goal because I am more than happy to feature success stories here." There's only so many slots



available, but there's one for you in the future perhaps. Wishing you all the best. Thank you so much. I'll see you at the next episode. Bye.

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