



SPI 260

Undergoing a Website Overhaul with Rocket Code

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Pat: This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, session number 260. Let's do this.

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. And now your host (one of his guilty pleasures is a movie titled Mean Girls), Pat Flynn.

Pat: Hey, thanks for joining me today in this session of the SPI podcast, and happy April to those of you who are following along week by week. And if you're not, I recommend you do it, because if you subscribe to the show, you're gonna get this amazing content sent to you absolutely free, obviously.

And we have an amazing lineup coming up this month. We have an interview with an amazing author from a book that I just read about how to create habit-forming products. Later in the month as well, we have a . . . Well, the title of the episode is "How to build a seven-figure business by building a \$7K per month business," so how to ladder up from \$7K to seven figures. An entire, essentially, a workshop for doing that.

And then, next week, there's an SEO expert that I invited on, who I actually hired to help me with search engine optimization, and we talk about some of the things that we all need to be worried about and doing, so make sure you subscribe.

This week, I have invited a couple friends on who have been working closely with me over the past couple years. This is Dusty and Corey, who are on my team. They're from a company called RocketCode.io, and they've been helping me with my website overhaul. Dusty you may actually recognize, the voice or just that name. He has been on my team for a while. He is responsible for a lot of the things that you see, he's my designer, and then Corey heads up project management for a lot of the web development related things. We're going to talk about my recent website overhaul.

So, for those of you who have been a part of the brand for a while,

you'll notice that the blog has been undergoing a number of changes over the past year, and it's been about a year since we made a drastic change to the look of it and the feel and what we wanted to do with it. A lot of things went right and some things didn't go as planned. But we talk about those things and also give you some advice for those of you who may be putting together a website, and specifically those of you who have a design already and you're looking to at some point in the future upgrade. What to look out for, things that are actually important, and things that are actually not important and those kinds of things.

So without further ado, here's Dusty and Cory from RocketCode.io, an amazing, amazing group of people. So, here we go.

Hey, what's up guys? Thank you so much for listening, and I'm so happy to welcome two guests on the show today. These are two of my awesome team members, part of the dev team, actually, and design team. We have Corey and Dusty from Rocket Code. What's up guys? Welcome to the show. Thanks for being here.

Corey: Absolutely. Thanks for having us.

Dustin: Thank you. Yeah.

Pat: Now those of you who are listening, you might recognize Dusty's voice. Dustin was in episode 136, way back in the day. That was the one where I actually recorded a little bit of conversation that I had with him and a few other members when I was in Columbus, Ohio. That was actually one of the most loved episodes of past because that was very NPR style in the way that it was created. Although it took me like 25 hours to edit 30 minutes of show. I think it was definitely worth it. So welcome back, Dusty.

What I wanted to do today, and why I wanted to bring you guys on was because you guys are experts. You guys are actually helping me with the website optimization. We just over the past year went over a huge overhaul, complete redesign, and now we're in the mode of actually optimizing what we redesigned and

making tweaks based on the analytics and things that we found out. I wanted to not only bring people in to this world of SPI and what's going on, but also have you guys help everybody else who's listening understand things like, when is the right time to do a redesign? How do you know what to do? What works best for you? I mean there's a million and one different options that one has when redesigning a website or optimizing it, and you know how do you even start to figure out what to do.

Before we get into that, however, I'll let both you kind of reintroduce yourselves. Corey this is your first time on the show so I'll start with you. Tell everybody out there listening what it is that you do. What's your role related to myself and SPI, and how you got into this world.

Corey:

So my primary role is project management. I think everybody is familiar with what project management involves, but it's a lot of . . . It is a cool combination of big picture thinking, bird's eye view. How do we basically manage all the moving pieces, and all the people involved, and making sure that everybody's . . . On the one hand, their time is respected, their performance and skill set is optimized. On the other hand, digging down into the deep precision with timing, and when are we going to release a feature. That's a lot of what I do.

How I got into this is, I've sort of backed into this. I came to project management from business analysis, so doing a lot of requirements, basically requirements and analysis, I guess you could say, and also quality assurance. So basically testing the requirements and the end builds of what features were being released. I have the other side of . . . The non-production side of web . . . overhaul, and a lot of client facing situations. And basically in the details and making sure that the quality of the thing that we're building is up to spec.

Before that, my background is actually policy analysis, so I'm basically taking a lot of information and distilling it into concise points that are available for use in decision-making, which does transfer into this role pretty well.

Pat: Yeah, and I think you're going to be able to offer a lot of help for people in terms of managing this whole process, because it's not an easy thing to just say, "Hey, I want something new designed," and then putting it out there. There's a number of things that have to happen in this specific order, which we'll get into.

Dusty, you're back on the show. A lot of people are very familiar with your work if they've been on SPI. Why don't you give people an update or introduce yourself in terms of how you've been able to contribute to all things SPI, and share your work.

Dustin: Yes, I'm Dustin Tevis, design director here at Rocket Code. Initially, actually, I started working with another team called Winning Edits, who's led by Matt Gartland. My introduction to SPI was around more brand assets and traditional graphic design. On the side, though, I was working with Rocket Code, and Rocket Code specializes in web and UI. Over the past couple years, my role has changed from production work and branding, over to the UI and the web side of things for SPI, from the website to SPP, then any other product that Pat releases.

Pat: Yeah, and so SPP is the Smart Podcast Player, so Dusty designed interfaces for those. Obviously what you see on smartpassiveincome.com is Dusty's handiwork as well.

So Corey, why don't we start with you. I think a big question is ... We'll start at the beginning. How do people know whether or not they actually have something sort of upgraded or optimized or redesigned? A redesign is a huge undertaking, and it may not even be worth it for some people. What are some of the things that they should be looking out for to make them decide to actually go through with this?

Corey: I think there's a number of things, and I think you mentioned something that's key, is that there are cases where a redesign, while it is appealing and enticing, may not be the right thing to do because it's really easy to underestimate the scope of what it takes, and all of the ancillary things that need to be considered, such as

SEO and the analytics involved. There's a case for, right off the bat, just pausing and asking whether or not this is something that I'm ready to invest in.

I think it's important to just be realistic and honest about whether or not you as a website owner fully understand the scope that's required in a website overhaul, re-platform, redevelopment, or even adding new features. So if you don't understand that, pulling someone in who does is super valuable because they can basically have a very honest conversation with you to see whether or not it's something that you should proceed with.

I think, first of all, getting some outside advice is super helpful. And the good thing is that just in the world we live in now, there are a ton of people who are really good at this stuff. Especially people, I think, in a generation maybe that is a little younger than myself, who just are really . . . insight into what it takes to build a good website.

First of all I would say, don't be shy about asking for help. Community web development, web design, is very collaborative. I think that's a theme that you'll see as we talk today, is that there's a ton of collaboration that not only is helpful, but I would suggest is necessary in order to accomplish a good web redesign.

Pat:

There are opportunities to upgrade your website and things that can be done on your own. For example, getting new plugins that can add new features, like you said, or getting access to new themes that are coming out, and those on the surface may seem very simple. Just almost plug-and-play, or just flip a switch and then you're off. But you have to realize that just changing how something looks is not everything. There's a lot of things sort of that's happening in the background that we have to pay attention to, such as, like you said, SEO. There's site speed. There's how the plugins all talk to each other, all those sorts of things. It's definitely not just flip a switch and then you're good to go.

Plus, I think a lot of the decisions that have to be made, have to be made consciously and for good reason. A lot of times people,

when they do redesigns, it's just based on what looks good or what the latest cool being that everybody is using or the latest plugin that everybody's using. You have to ask yourself some questions. For example, why would you want to upgrade? Is it necessary right now? Do you have the capacity to do it, knowing that it's going to be a little bit tougher than just flipping a switch? What are the most important metrics for you, as well? That's another one that . . . Is it email? Is it getting people to purchase a product, or whatever? Those are all going to influence what happens during optimization and redesign.

And the other part of it is tracking, because a lot of times, we do these things to our websites without even really realizing what the base level, or base kind of thing is to understand, "Well, is this actually an improvement or not?" So there's a lot of things that are involved. So Dusty, this is where I want to bring you in. And it's like, from a designer's point of view, knowing what's happening out there in the world and these people who want to start upgrading their websites. I know you have the knowledge to say, "Hey, this is more than just what it looks like. It's also how it functions, and how it works."

How do you approach the design project knowing that it's more than just about how pretty something looks? You definitely design pretty things, but I know you also keep in mind how things work and all these other metrics and tracking. That's fine. How do you even start to begin to process all that?

Dustin: At a high level, I ask myself, and then the client involved, just what kind of extensibility they actually need in this new project. Because when it comes down to it, the higher the price range can usually mean just more extensibility, or not, right?

So if you start with a basic theme, maybe you pay a couple hundred bucks for it, that's awesome. And like you mentioned before, plugins, cool, but that limits the extensibility of the site itself. I think when we get into the area of custom builds, where extensibility is extremely important, I think that's where the first touchpoint is, and I think that's

where we decide if it's something that's worth doing or not.

Pat: Right. So when it comes to custom builds, for example, how would you recommend somebody who potentially doesn't have a ton of money, maybe just has a little bit of resources to go out and find a designer. How would you recommend the approach, then, to make sure that the designer that they're working with isn't just making something that looks pretty but it actually is going to work for them, too?

Dustin: My biggest piece of advice there would be, if you can find an awesome designer, that's amazing. Make sure they're definitely versed in web, and make sure they have a little bit of a technological background. Because if you don't, that designer will design you into a hole. It will be a very deep hole, and it will set expectations up front that, wow, you can have the world, and you'll soon realize you can't, at least not without a huge price tag. But if you find a designer you like, and maybe they're not very well versed in web, it's not a bad idea to find a developer as well, that you can help tag some of those issues.

Pat: Corey, can you speak to that? If you . . . Okay, maybe you find a designer that has done good work at minimal, sort of actual web development work, so they're not . . . They don't fully understand how that works, but if they were to work with the developer they can work together. How would you, as a project manager recommend people who, again, are at the beginning position, or maybe they've had their site for a while and just are looking to upgrade. How do they best manage communication between the designer and the developer to get them the results?

Corey: Yeah, I think ideally, having those two people who are involved with it, if they can be in the same location, that's a really great advantage because then they can collaborate, and whatever the designer's designing, they can basically do a feasibility test with the developer to make sure that whatever you're thinking of is actually feasible.

We do that at Rocket Code. When we design things. We try to aim

pretty big. We don't want to be modest but we also need to have a good tech team to make sure that the thing that we're aiming for actually is possible. And once we have a decent amount of a thumbs up, then . . . But I think it is critical to have that relationship established at the beginning, so that you don't get too far ahead. Like Dusty said, designing yourself into a hole. If you think the designer that you have could be a little light on tech skills, then immediately seek out a web developer so that . . . Usually, there's some sort of organic relationship between design and development. So I rarely see a situation where a designer doesn't know of any web developers. So usually, there's some references there that you can leverage but it is critical to have those two working step by step in the beginning. That way, you don't have to change, essentially, your scope or your direction because the designs are feasible right.

Pat: And this almost reminds me of the relationship between an architect and an engineer. When I was working architecture, you know, we hated the engineers. The engineers hated us because the architects would always design things that were kind of outlandish and very hard to actually build. And then the engineers would come back to the architects and say, "No, we can't do that." So we have to change the design, which obviously the architects didn't want to do. So the best way to sort of mediate that is to have those relationships early, set those expectations upfront.

And also from the website owner's point of view, just have a really clear understanding of what you want. What is it . . . Like what are your top goals? What do you want to happen? And then, you also have to let go a little bit. This is the other thing. I used to get a little . . . Back in the day, when I was custom designing my own websites and hiring people to do that, I would get a little bit too much into detail and that would often kind of upset the designer. I don't know if that's because they felt I didn't trust them enough or maybe they think I'm just kind of annoying. Dusty, can you speak to that in terms of . . . You know, if a person is coming in listening to the show and they're like, "Okay, I wanna do a redesign. I have ideas on what I want to happen. I might even have a lot of ideas on what I want to

happen. How much should I share with the designer or how much should I just let them use their artistic license?”

Dustin:

Yeah, no. Absolutely. To introduce to a designer, I mean, you want to bring up everything that you possibly could. I think the best piece of advice would just be not be too restrictive on how they're going to actually commit to this but just, high level, business goals. Business requirements. Keep that all documented so that the designer themselves has something to run with. I think it's very important for the designers to kind of take all those inputs, run away for a minute and maybe start moving wire frames. You don't want to jump straight into hi-fi design because again you're going to get . . . Or kind of attached to something and then realize it's not feasible. So that designer should throw together some wire frames, put some functional and potentially technical arms around it and then bring that back to the client and kind of vet that from there. And I think that's where the client can be reintroduced and be like, “Hey, I actually had other ideas around this interaction or how these pages would look.” And I think that's where the main part of the collaboration starts.

Pat:

Okay, and I agree with you. I think the wire framing is really, really important. Making sure that there's a lot of hyphenates along the way so that one can catch something early before it's too late. That's happened to me before as well. So I guess after the wire frame and after a bunch of back and forth until they kind of are set and agree on wire frame, what are the next steps for the designer slash website owner from there to continue moving forward after the wire frame? What are the next phases if you will?

Dustin:

So we have a group of wire frames, the designer will then go on and create hi-fi mock ups of the actual screens that he presented. He or she presented. And a lot of times if you find a dev and a designer together, they will actually start prototyping this stuff just upfront. It just kind of depends on your budget and then what type of resources you have on hands. So once those hi-fi mocks are complete, then again we just come back to the client and we say, “Hey remember what we did with the wire frames? Let's do that

again, let's just make sure we hit all of our business and functional requirements and then hash out the collaboration.”

Corey: Yeah. I think one thing that's really beneficial with solid wire framing, is that it allows the client, so in your case, when we wire something up for you. Then first what it does is it crystallizes it in our minds what we're expecting the functional requirements to be around the site. Because it's really hard to basically write business requirements in thin air without any structural context to the wire frames. And so then, I think prior to committing to development, there is the opportunity to just finalize the requirements with this basically the skeletal structure in place. So you have your visual with the wire frames accompanied with some level of requirements to then proceed with. That's really helpful for a designer and developer to basically have some constraints to operate then.

Pat: Okay, I understand that. What are some of the big . . . Corey, this is back to you. What are some of the big mistakes that people make during this whole process of getting the website redesigned and getting it live and kind of just having it go from there. You know, I know the mistakes that I've made but I'm curious to know with all the people that you've worked with and the experience that you have at Rocket Code, like what are some of the big mistakes that people, who aren't really in tune to this process, are making.

Corey: Yeah there's often . . . It's a good question. There is often a lack of appreciation for the strategy side of things and it's not because it's demean, but it's harder to quantify . . .

Pat: Which, sorry?

Corey: It's really about ... It's harder to quantify strategizing about website and it's easy to quantify what a design and initial build will do for you. And so there's often a rush to go into some sort of production because as a client you understand what you're paying for, and you want to see some sort of result. And it's easy to shortcut the strategic side of that relationship. And so not having good requirements can often lead to a situation where when you get to

the end of a build where there's basically a crunch at the end to fix a bunch of stuff because it wasn't vetted upfront. Or if things that, use cases that weren't considered at the beginning are pushed to the very back to or towards, like, time when you need to release because those conversations were never considered.

And that's something that because it's harder to quantify is something that we've seen. But on the client side, a lack of . . . I guess you could say, for lack of a better word, appreciation for. But also on the agency side, I have experiences in a couple different places where it is . . . There's also a tendency to want to short cut that strategy. But that really is crucial. The planning side of building a quality website is the most important stage because it sets the tone for how everything else goes.

Dustin: And it allows you to really not overthink it because you have everything laid out. But also, truly, milestones within that project. So you know by this point in time we can have all of this done because we have these functional and technical requirements.

Corey: Yep. And I would say, Pat, just one more thing. Lessons that we've learned is not allowing a period of time for feedback. So we go design something and then we immediately want to go building something because we're really excited about it. But it's important to let those designs marinate with the client and let them have feedback. Constrained feedback over a predefined amount of time. So that you can incorporate that and that everyone's aligned and on the same page before going to development. Otherwise what you're missing is the developer begins to code the website. But then has to refactor some of the code or make some changes because we didn't allow for a good feedback boot.

Pat: Yeah. So I guess the big lesson for everybody out there listening is, no matter what level you're at, whether you're completely redesigning your website or maybe starting from scratch going completely custom build with an agency involved and a whole team behind it, or maybe you have a WordPress website you just want to add a few more things that aren't plugins yet or you know you're

just customizing it a little bit. Either way, I think it's really important that you need to give yourself time to leave feedback for prototypes of these things first. That way you're able to see them, like the guys were saying, just like sleep on it a little bit. And I know it's hard because we want to rush out and do these things and especially when we start seeing the hi-fi, high-fidelity, designs come in, it's like we get really excited.

I've done this, even with you guys before, where I've seen a design right away and I get so excited just because it's blowing my mind. But then I look at it the next day or two and I'm like, "This thing is a little off. Maybe it's not as great as I thought it was going to be. I need to leave feedback," and luckily you guys obviously put the time in to have the opportunity to leave feedback, in which case we talk about these things.

And I think that's another thing. Can you guys speak a little bit ... Dusty, we'll start with you, when you get feedback from clients. How do you best like that feedback coming in? Because I think a lot of people might not be so good at communicating, maybe, what they need and might do it in a way that might actually work against them. You know what I mean? Like how do you best communicate feedback on somebody else's designs. Because I know for you, you take this work very seriously. It's your art almost. And I don't want to tell you that your art sucks, right? So how do you tell somebody that something needs to be changed without telling them that it's not good.

Dustin:

No, absolutely. I mean I think somewhere between the client and designer is just full transparency. And that obviously we're both in this to make the best possible product that we can. And before when we did feedback, unfortunately we didn't use a specific tool and it happened through emails. And if you have feedback through emails, it's an endless loop, a vicious cycle, that turns in, both for the client and for the designer, into just kind of a hot mess.

So what we started using more recently is actually a tool called InVision. InVision allows you to upload static screens, whether they

be wire frames or hi-fi designs. Link them together, so you can actually click through the static screens and go from one view to another. And then leave comments, physically, on the actual screen that they're currently looking at. What this allows is kind of a sense of transparency between the client and the designer, where they can have a certain conversation or dialogue. And having that direct feedback allows you to kind of get . . . To solve the problem a lot quicker than you normally would through a communication like e-mail. But then allows everybody to kind of regroup, vet comments, vet the feedback and then decide on what the action plans are.

Corey: Everybody's saying the same thing.

Pat: Yeah, you guys used InVision when we were doing the search redesign. If you haven't been on SPI lately check out the new search feature. It's amazing. It sort of auto-populates results and the results are based on a lot more data points. It's a lot cleaner, a lot better. Love it. And guys, well done on that. It was awesome.

You had shared with me this InVision app thing. Which is sort of like . . . If any of you are in video, there's a tool called Webster. Which if you're creating video for clients you kind of put it through Webster. People can leave comments directly on the videos at certain points and stuff. It's really helpful. This is like the equivalent to that but for web design. And I was able to actually click through and it actually it almost felt like a real website but apparently it's just .jpg files or .png files instead. And so it gave me really good insight.

I think, in terms of communication, e-mail would be the worst. I think direct communication with a designer or two, if there wasn't a big team on, like, Skype or something, would be second worst. Then there's things like Slack, which are actually really good at helping to archive things, share images and save things and communicate. Especially within a team. But I think for specifically if you're working with a developer and they have access to InVision app, try to get them to use it because that's going to be the best way that they're going to be able to communicate with you in terms of what it is that's going to be engineered. So that's . . .

- Dustin: The awesome part about InVision, it's low bar to entry, there's literally nothing to learn and they have a free version. So quite literally anybody can use it.
- Pat: That's cool. Would that be a cool tool that somebody can use to share with their audience a particular kind of way a website might work and get their immediate feedback on it before it's actually engineered?
- Corey: Yeah, I mean a hundred percent. I mean, I've actually seen people share it with their community. The only problem you might run into is if your community is quite large, that feedback might become a little bit overwhelming because you can click and add an annotation and pretty much type whatever you want. So as long as that's controlled, and it's kind of a subset of the community, I mean absolutely.
- Pat: I mean, let's talk about that really quick. I think it's important to get community involved at some points during your entire entrepreneurial journey. I think it's a great way to build revenue, fans, get people to become part of the brand and actually help influence what it becomes. I've done that many times in the past.
- For example, if you have a book design that you're working on. Just create two different types that may be interesting to you that you might choose from and share it on Facebook. I mean, ask people, "Which one do you like better? A or B?" You're going to get a bazillion comments back from people expressing their opinion but also it's going to help increase your score. And it's going to make people feel like they're part of the brand too, which I think is great.
- But in terms of website redesign, I know a lot of people who go through redesigns they created on however means they can and then they share it with their audience. And then some people love it and then some people say they don't love it. And then that leaves the person baffled because they're like, "Crap, my audience of this many people are saying this thing but they're saying this thing." Like Corey, where does one even start to filter that feedback and how do you know who's right or wrong?

Corey: Yeah. Well, the one thing that mitigates a lot of that . . . I guess, take some of the emotion out of it, is the fact that there's tools that can funnel users through two different experiences simultaneously in a live situation so that you don't have to rely on, I guess . . . Yeah. So you know that's just . . . The ability to do AB testing which is . . . It's a concept that's been around for a long time. But in the web world, it's basically just . . . It allows you to run a parallel experience and you can determine the amount, the percentage of users, that you want to run through either your control and your variation or maybe two variations. And to get the data behind how people are interacting with these different experiences. And that way you get much clearer indicators of how the functionality is, how people are responding to the functionality, rather than having to wade through the noise just to get to the signal.

Pat: Yes, I'm glad you brought up split-testing. That's something we've been doing, this AB testing thing we're using . . . I mean there's a number of different tools. I forget which tool we're using.

Corey: Yeah, the last one, the one that we leveraged for your navigation and home page was called Zarget. It's a new start up, also. It was great to be able to work with them to get data on both your navigation and your homepage.

Pat: Yeah, so there was Zarget. I think there's also Optimizely. There's a visual website optimizer. There's a few of these tools out there that can help serve different variations of, for example, your home page and whatever your number one call to action is on your home page. And hopefully you have a number one call to action on your home page of some kind.

You can then determine the conversions, for each of those different pages and variables. To see, without even having to ask people. You just kind of get the data. And the numbers don't lie at that point. And then you can just flip that one on. Or have that one be the one that's engineered. So I think . . . Big lesson, if you are at that level at which you can start beginning to . . . You can start to begin to add more resources to your website and optimization. You can start to

explore split testing with your developer and your designer, coming up with different variations to help people into a particular call to action that you may have and then start tracking those things. I think that's going to be the way for you to know for sure whether or not a specific design or iteration that you have is better than another.

So you know, we're talking a little more high level. And I know most of you who are listening to this right now might not be there yet. But it is something to strive for and I think it's definitely something that, especially once you start generating an income, you'll be able to see dollars and cents related to these different iterations that you're creating. So it can become very exciting and fun and, you know, we're at that point now.

For example, you had mentioned the home page iterations. We have different versions of the home page. Or had, at least, we're collecting data. But that told us very clearly what was working better than others. And we've done this on other different parts of websites and specific parts of blog posts and other things too. It actually becomes a lot of fun and exciting to have the numbers tell you what to do.

Dusty, I want to talk to you really quick about people's desires when they are redesigning their website. What are some of the things that you feel a lot of people who are redesigning their website want, but maybe don't necessarily need? Or maybe just superfluous or just kind of extra? I think there's some basic needs that have to happen, but a lot of times people see other people doing things and that just might look kind of cool or seem kind of amazing and it's probably not right for them. But how do we filter what's actually needed in the design versus what's not? This is even before, obviously, we start testing and split-testing, it's at the core. What should be on that page or what shouldn't be on that page?

Dustin:

Yeah, but I think, the first thing we do is kind of remove the subjective nature from it. So, obviously, we know we need to build an awesome product. But you are not necessarily your audience. Right? You can't necessarily speak for them. So I think, what we like to run with here is, I recommend just really, truly focusing on an

MVP. And that MVP can be of anything.

So for example, you see this awesome search experience that's an SPI.com. As a client, you're like, "I want that. I'm sold. How do we do it?" But you really need to take a step back and say, "Hey what's a true MVP?" Where we can really test that a search is needed on your site or is it an experience that your audience is yearning for. So I think that first step is vetting what truly is needed. And then once you kind of vet that, create a true MVP. Which . . .

Pat: Yeah, and an MVP is a minimum viable product, essentially.

Dustin: Yep.

Pat: Which is a smart strategy all around. Whether you're creating courses or products or changing website designs. I think it's a very smart way to go. Corey, do have any thoughts on this sort of feature creep if you will?

Corey: Yeah I think . . . I guess, not to pick on Dusty's trade, but be wary of like an overly designed comp or markup because there is the temptation to want to jazz up a website as much as possible with like really robust designs. But I think the thing to watch out for is, "Does somebody have to explain to me how this website works?" That's a sign that a website is just overly designed by someone who may be, going back to what we were talking about earlier, may not be intimately involved in web design. If you're familiar with the design of everyday things, but he talks a lot about learned behavior versus intuitive behaviors. If you have to learn how to use that thing based on like a manual or things like that, it's probably not well-designed. But if the thing explains itself, based on the layout, then you have a good product to run with.

Pat: And that makes sense, but then the question is, well how do you know? I mean a lot of the, and this is me in the beginning too, you have no idea what works and what doesn't or what's too much or too little. How would you even go about deciding what should or shouldn't be on there after you see, for example, wire frame. I feel like most people who get something back from a web designer

might be just like, “Okay. I trust you.” But then like how do you know? Or is there a way to know.

Dustin:

I mean, at a high level, I think it’s important for the client and the designer and developer to engage with the audience before they even start messing around. What features might work, might not. Especially with less experienced designers and developers in the industry. Let’s just ask the audience. Like what features are they looking for? And that could be something as simple as a survey they send out. Maybe offer something with that survey. But you’d be surprised to find that if you have a following that really believes you, they are willing to speak up and let you know what they want in the product.

Pat:

Yeah, that definitely happened with us. We did a survey and seventy five hundred people responded, which was amazing and that influenced a lot of things that happened all over SPI and even internally on SPI, on the email lists and the different buckets and that sort of thing.

So definitely do a survey. I’ll link back to that episode I did with Ryan Levesque, who is the author of a book called Ask, which really changed everything. So that will help you run these surveys. But a good question to ask is, “Hey, what’s something that you wish was available on site that wasn’t?” And on the flip side, “What’s something that you feel is on the site that isn’t necessary.” And just asking straight up to your audience what these questions are, they’re going to give you some insight. And yeah, there’s going to be some people who say things that nobody else says. Those ones you can just kind of have as, “You know. Okay, that’s interesting,” but then the ones where you start to see patterns and start to see a lot of people say the same thing. Well that’s obviously a good indicator of well that’s something you should or shouldn’t have or at least should think about when you go through the through the iteration.

Corey, when you get the design up and it’s live . . . I mean, the answer is no. But is this the end? No. You you keep going and you have to continually determine to what . . . You have to keep track of

things and make sure that things are working and if they aren't, that people follow up and fix those things. What are some of the best practices that people have when a brand new website goes live, like maybe even on that day, what should that day of the brand new launch be like?

There's all these things coming from a marketing point of view, which I think are important. I think anytime you come out with a new design, it's a great excuse to get your e-mail list to come over and visit your website. It's a great excuse to make this grand, big announcement or even do giveaways to help share and get all these things viral and have it grow socially. But in terms of just making sure things are working. How to fix bugs, which always happen after it goes live, even if it's tested offsite. Tell me about that day and that week. What should one do to make sure things are working and running correctly?

Corey: Yeah, there has to be a solid relationship with the clients such that . . . There is inevitably going to be a list of bugs or follow up features that . . . Whether it's due to time or budget or . . . isn't feasible for the day-one launch. And so there is a negotiation for how to prioritize those things. Whether they're actual bugs. Obviously, if it's a feature that's impeding a website, a user from actually using the website, that would be a critical showstopper that needs to be fixed ASAP. But there's other things that are less important and can go into some sort of backlog that can get prioritized and I think that's something that should be a collaborative effort with the client.

So you know when we work with you and we say we have these things in the backlog. How important is this to you to be address right now? Or when we have free time? Or is it just something that it just stays dormant? Those are conversations that they just need to be transparent and direct. And I think it helps build trust. When we just expose things that we see are, perhaps, wrong or not totally optimized with the site at day-one launch.

And this is where productivity tools can really useful whether it's Trello or Asana, or different tools where there is a collaborative nature to them and it sort of sets up the documentation and allows

everybody involved to sort of prioritize what we should do next is. Those are the things that I would suggest for the day one and week one and month one launch, is to basically work with clients to prioritize what, and in what priority those bugs . . .

Pat: Yeah. I mean, I would definitely . . . For those of you listening who are going to do a redesign at some point, hopefully this has been a good sort of primer for you or something to look forward to do. But also kind of a warning for some of these things that might happen. You will have bugs, unexpected things happen the day you go live. Expect that. If you don't have any, well congratulations. That's awesome that that happened. But usually, something will happen. It's always happened with us. And that's okay, and it's just something that's expected.

But what we've also communicated and said, on launch day that they're going to be there to fix those critical things. They're not just taking vacations on that day because they finally went live. So making sure that developer that you're work with, and even the designer, they're available on that day, and a lot during that week, to help fix things that are critical.

So I would recommend, definitely, getting ready to start keeping track of some of the things that are coming in. And even if you start to get a lot of them. I wouldn't get upset, obviously, if there are very major things that were supposed to happen that we're told that that did happen but then didn't happen. That's something that I would obviously bring that up.

But even if it's small, I would just start keeping track of these things that are going to be fixed that you can present. And having them know that you're doing this is going to help them want to make sure things are fixed and done well on the day it goes live anyway. So having that be a transparent, authentic relationship, I think, is also really important. So that that's great. And then, again, setting those expectations up for yourself and for everybody involved. Honest communication, that's definitely the way to go.

The last thing I want to mention related to web design in this entire

conversation. Dusty, we'll go back to you. And this is related to the mobile friendly version of websites. This is obviously something we should all be paying attention to. If we have a redesign or are redesigning even a small part of our existing website, we need to make sure that whatever is being done is also mobile friendly because this is something that Google now pays major attention to in terms of search engine rankings. And also just making sure that the user experience on mobile, which a lot of people are using mobile now to visit our websites, is also great.

So can you help a person on the other end listening through the process of how to make sure that their website is also mobile-friendly. I'm not asking you to give a lesson on okay, what is the definition of mobile friendly or not? That's up to the designer. But how does one make sure that their designer that they work with is actually doing things right?

Dustin: The easiest way to make sure it happens correctly, honestly, is just tell the designer, "Let's design mobile first." Because when you design mobile first, you really can tell what features need to exist on that experience and from there it's easy building that out to desktop. I mean, mobile use over the past few years has just skyrocketed. So obviously that's a very, very huge market that you want to keep a close eye on. And making sure that everything that you want, all the functionality and features that you want to include, if you can do that in a mobile first wire frame in routes, it makes it a lot easier to expand that over to desktop.

Pat: I also think doing that approach helps one think of what are the most important things that need to be shown. Because you obviously can't put the whole homepage on the screen before they start scrolling. So you have to really be selective on what's important? What's the first impression going to be like? What are the most important things that need to be seen? That can also just be reflected on the desktop version as well, but the smaller screen on the phone just makes it more apparent and it forces you to think about those things. Right?

Dustin: Yep. Absolutely.

- Pat: So we'll finish up. Just one more question to each of you. Just one last piece of advice for somebody who is about to undertake a web design. Corey, we'll start with you. What's one tip or piece of advice you have for that person who is a little bit nervous because they're about to potentially put down a little bit of money to make this happen, but you have their backs. What would you offer them?
- Corey: I think you hit on it earlier when you said that you have some of the control and let the designer and developers thrive. Obviously there's a category for feedback. But you'd be amazed at what good design and development team can accomplish when they feel like they are empowered to, basically, optimize your brand. If they don't feel that empowerment, then it's inevitable that their designs aren't going to be as robust as they could be otherwise.
- So I think that there is there is a relinquishing of, I guess, a control of details that is really important and just maintaining that trust and transparency that you can have with that development and design team.
- Pat: Along those lines, do you think it's important for a person, even if they're hiring somebody just for a one-off project, to have that designer and or developer really understand their mission behind their brand, the story behind it or all that stuff? Or is that something a designer and developer don't really care about?
- Corey: I think it's absolutely critical. If you don't have that context, then you do miss out on the overall message. You can just totally miss on the designs completely. The more you understand about business goals, the spirit of the brand, if it's an e-commerce . . . revenue targets there are, all those things inform design. So yeah, having that kind of detail is critical in a good web design.
- Pat: Dusty, would you suggest that a good filter to decide whether or not they're working with the right person is whether or not they ask you about those things?
- Dustin: 100%. I mean, it's all about open communication and transparency. If you come to a designer with an idea, and they're like, "Cool, we'll

build it.” That’s definitely a red flag. If they’re unfamiliar with their brands, person working with them, they should be sending over like a brands questionnaire. It’s at least going to give a little insight of what the communities like, what are the brand’s like, what kind of users are actually using the site. And if that doesn’t come through, I mean, to me, that’s kind of like, “Maybe you’re not the right person for this job.”

Pat: Nice. Any final tips, Dusty, on the design side of things for people?

Dustin: Honestly, just be open. Be communicative. And don’t be scared to get feedback. I mean, you mentioned this before. Something like, “Well how do I tell the designer that maybe their design isn’t so awesome.” Tell them that. They might be unaware that what they did might not be the right fit for your audience. And if you never say anything, it’s just going to take you down at a bad time.

Pat: Great. Guys, thank you so much for coming on. I really appreciate you taking the time. I know you guys are busy over there, working on a bunch of stuff. So thank you so much. I know, I speak on behalf of everybody listening, this is really, really helpful and I hope this will help alleviate some of the pains that people might have down the road with the relationship they have with their team who is helping with their redesign.

So Dusty, Corey thank you so much. We appreciate you. And look forward to talking to you guys off the podcast.

Corey: Absolutely. Talk to you soon.

Pat: All right. I hope you enjoyed that episode with Corey and Dusty. Thank you guys so much for joining me and for imparting that wisdom and being open and honest about it the entire way. If you want to check out Rocket Code, you can check out rocketcode.io. Obviously the show notes, as always, they exist back on the blog at smartpassiveincome.com/session260.

And then finally I want to thank, also, an amazing tool that I’ve been using to help me with social media. You know, social media reach

has been plummeting. A lot of tools have been sort of putting the brakes on how far we can actually reach with our messages. And Edgar is the only tool designed to help. It's the first and only tool made to specifically address this issue of the plummeting social media reach. It's a scheduling tool that automatically builds a library of every update a user uploads so they can share them again and again over time. And I've used it and I've had much success with it. A lot more traffic a lot more engagement with my audience through this tool and I highly recommend you check it out. I still use it and I use it for both Twitter and Facebook and it's just an amazing engine for your social media plan. And if you don't have one, this helps you set one up too.

So it's awesome and they have an amazing deal for you, just for you guys actually. So there's a two week free trial of Edgar that's open and available for you. No credit card required, so literally you can just get it set up and running. It's not auto build and it's really easy to set up. All you have to do is go to meetedgar.com/spi and fill out that info there.

So again two week free trial of Edgar. We've had them on the show before as a sponsor and we've had an amazing result and a lot of feedback, great feedback, from people who have used it and I'm excited they're back again to sponsor. And that is meetedgar.com/spi. Fill in that info and you'll be all set.

All right. Thanks guys, I appreciate you and I look forward to seeing you or, not really seeing you, because I can't see you, but hearing from you or you hearing from me. You know what I mean. I look forward to serving you next week with the episode with my SEO higher search engine optimization. Something obviously that's very important for all of us, no matter what stage we're at. So we'll talk about the basics. We'll talk about the advanced stuff. Look forward to that. Until then, keep rocking it guys. Take care. Love yeah. See you in the next episode.

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