



SPI 342

What You Need to Know before Hosting a Conference with Ronsley Vaz

October 31, 2018

Ronsley Vaz: Because if you go through a hotel they got hotel prices. So—

Pat Flynn: It's like forty, fifty dollars per lunch per person or something like that, for just a sandwich. I've seen that a couple times. I'm like, "This is crazy."

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, seventy-two dollars or something. I remember that quote very clearly. That was . . . well it's lunch, and I'm like, "Are you kidding me?"

Pat Flynn: You're listening to Ronsley Vaz, who is the founder of the [We Are Podcast](#) conference, a podcast conference that happens in Australia, and revealing some of the hidden costs that might come with putting on an event like this. Now, I know a lot of people who put on events, and all of them could be well qualified to talk about this topic of, well how do we put on an event, big or small? What are the things that are involved? How do you actually get people to come to the event? How do you market it? How do you even know where to start?

Well those are the kinds of things that we're gonna talk about today. Like I said, I know so many people who would be qualified to come on the show and talk about those kinds of things. From our good friend Chris Ducker, to Amy Porterfield, to Darren Rowse, Michael Hyatt, the list goes on. Cliff Ravenscraft just put on an amazing show. Michael Stelzner.

I wanted to get Ronsley here because likely a lot of you don't know Ronsley. Ronsley started from the ground up. He didn't really have a large audience or an audience, to begin with. We talk about the start of how he was able to, and even why he wanted to put a podcast conference together in Australia, and how he made it so. We're gonna talk about that today in and amongst a number of other topics related to everything that's involved with this. It's one of the most rewarding things that you can do.

I'm really excited because I'm putting on my own event shortly, and likely you may have already heard about it. If not you can

check it out at FlynnCon1.com. That's right, a conference that I'm putting together for the SPI community to bring everybody together to spend a lot of that time I usually spend on other people's presentations on my own conference, to bring everybody in San Diego, at a family-friendly event in San Diego, in the summer of 2019. You can read more about it at FlynnCon1.com. Again, I'm learning. I wanted to speak to Ronsley like I've spoken to many of my other colleagues to just learn as much as I could. I thought this would be a great conversation to record for all of you who might be at the same position that I am: "Well, how do I even get started? What's all involved? What are the costs?" Let's talk about it. So, before all that, let's hit the music.

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—his *Back to the Future* collection is gettin' a little out of hand—Pat Flynn!

Pat Flynn: What's up, everybody? Thank you so much for joining me today in Session 342 of these Smart Passive Income Podcast. My name is Pat Flynn, here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. The amazing way to help people is actually in person, by creating your own event. I've done a lot of smaller events in the past, but like I said, I'm putting on my first large conference later this coming year. It's gonna be fun. FlynnCon1.com. I want to learn as much as I can about it.

This is what I do. When I want to do something new, something I've never done before—by the way, it's making me super nervous, but that's why I'm doing it. I look for that fear. I look for that nervousness. If I don't feel at all a little nervous about the next big thing that I'm doing, then I'm probably not going big enough. It's probably not going to help me or my business grow, or anybody else grow at all. So yes, definitely very nervous, but I think that that means there could be some potentially large rewards on the other end of actually putting on this conference.

Like, I do all the time. Every time I'm trying to learn something new, I make it easy for myself by not opening up textbooks or doing massive web searches or watching a ton of YouTube videos. Yes, I do do those things, but the easiest thing, the easiest route, is to actually go to people who have done what I'm trying to do and ask them questions, pick their brain, understand what they wish they had done differently, and that's what we're talking a lot about today with Ronsley Vaz, again, from [We Are Podcast](#). You can find him at [WeArePodcast.com](#), and stick around cause this is gonna be a good one. Here we go.

Ronsley welcome to the SPI podcast. Thanks for being here man.

Ronsley Vaz: Dude, this has been bucket list stuff for me. It's been five years in the making to get here and try to do a whole bunch of stuff, so I'm super excited to be here.

Pat Flynn: I'm excited too. I've gotten to know you over the last couple of years, especially since having met you in person in San Diego, and then by the time that everybody who's listening is listening to this, I will have just gotten back from your event in Australia called We Are Podcast. It's a podcasting event in Australia that I've just been looking forward to for such a long time. At the time that we're recording this, the event hasn't happened. By the time you all listen to it—this is the magic of batch processing and online business stuff—I will have already gotten back, so you've likely already seen, if you've been following me on Instagram, a number of pictures and photos on Twitter and whatnot. If you haven't, definitely check 'em out, but man I'm so stoked to chat with you today, because as many people in the audience know, I'm putting on my own even in July of 2019 in San Diego.

I'll give you more information about that at the end of the chat here, but I'm gonna come from a very selfish point of view and also on behalf of the audience, from those who want to eventually someday put on an event of their own, because you've done it multiple years now, and you've gone through a lot of ups and downs, and I'd love to chat with you about all that so that we can be better equipped for

a better experience for our own attendees. If you don't mind I'd just love to dive in and start asking you some questions about all this, cause this is really new for me.

Ronsley Vaz: I'd love to chat Pat. I think for me it's been a great four years. I think I only remember the good stuff, but I'd love to help in any way way I can. I'd love to actually ask a question if I may?

Pat Flynn: Yeah.

Ronsley Vaz: What got you to this point? You've been killing it. What got you to this point where you decided that putting on an event was the way forward?

Pat Flynn: That's a great question. I forgot for a second whose podcast this was, but you're a podcaster so you naturally go into question mode. I love that. The reason why—and thank you for setting this up—the reason why I wanted to do my own event is because it's been ten years now that I've been doing business, and actually in October when I'm at your event that will be literally ten years since I started SmartPassiveIncome.com, which is pretty cool.

Ronsley Vaz: Congratulations.

Pat Flynn: Thank you.

Ronsley Vaz: That's cool.

Pat Flynn: I've always been very afraid of public speaking, and I've gotten better at it over the years, although it still makes me quite nervous, but I'm always looking to level up the way that I produce things for my audience. I've been spending a lot of time learning about the art of public speaking, and performance, and stage work, and I think a lot of people who have seen me in person speak at other people's events have always said that I'm one of the best speakers, that I put, obviously, a lot of time into my talks. I'm entertaining, whatnot. I put sometimes hundreds of hours into other people's talks or other people's conferences for my talks.

My team and I were talking, were like, “Why not? Especially with the kids getting older.” And I want to spend more time with them. Traveling is hard and going to conferences takes a lot of time. “Next year, why not slow it down a little bit? Why not bring your audience to you? Then you can spend time on your own stuff.” I was like, “Man that’s such a good idea.” I also love the idea of an event to bring my community together because when I go to other events, it’s like there are a lot of fans there, which is great, but I would love a space where you know you’re gonna find other people who are like you because you all listen to the same thing, because you all follow the same person, and I just wanna provide that environment for my audience too. I think there’s no better way to teach and leave a long-lasting memorable impact than in person.

Ronsley Vaz: 100 percent. I think for me it was similar. If I kinda look at We Are Podcast right now I do not think that we’d do it—well let me be frank, I don’t do it for the money at all, like zero. There’s no reason. It’s the effort that goes into putting on the event. It’s not necessarily ROI from a money perspective at all. For me, I know that I’m in business to hang out with cool people, doing cool stuff, in cool places. The event is mainly for me to hang out with cool people for those three days, and then hang out with the speakers at the speaker retreat for the four days following. It’s like my pre-Christmas, and I think that that’s the primary reason why I put on We Are Podcast, is to hang out with cool people. I have no doubt you’re gonna enjoy yourself, man. It’s gonna be epic.

Pat Flynn: It’s gonna be epic, but it’s gonna be an epic amount of work, I know, which is where I wanted to have you come on and just bring us back down to Earth. I think a lot of us have these ideas for events, big and small, that we wanna put on, but as soon as we start considering all the parts and pieces that are involved it gets overwhelming, and a lot of us just stop. Already in the process, I’ve been like, “Oh man, should we go down this route? Should we do it?” By this point, I’ve committed to it. I’ve announced it. There’s a URL for ticket sales and whatnot. I’m at that point already where there’s no turning back, it seems.

You say this isn't for the money, it's for the people, which I completely understand, but I would love to start from the beginning. If I were planning an event right from the start, what are some of the first things that I need to consider, just to even wrap my head around all that's involved? What are some of the first steps?

Ronsley Vaz: Sure. Well for me there, was going back to 2015 . . . 2014 actually, when I thought of the idea. It happened over breakfast. A mentor of mine said to me, "Well, there's no one doing podcasting or podcast events in Australia. Why don't you be the first?" My brain did not know how to comprehend that because I did not sleep for the next few days. I was like, "That's such a great idea, but how do I make this happen?" I haven't even put on an event for two people before, let alone a conference.

What I did next was I just made a list of the people I knew who had put on events, different kinds. It didn't matter what kind of event they had. Whether they put on a meetup or they put on a large conference or they put on a small intensive, two-day intensive, it didn't matter what kind of event it was, but I think all of them had . . . it was always a business event sort of person, and I kind of just went and started talking to them. I would schedule an hour to have a conversation with them, either over Skype or in person. It was fascinating that every single one of them told me, "Ronsley, you're stupid, do not do this."

Pat Flynn: Why? Why do they say that?

Ronsley Vaz: That was really interesting. I listened to that, and I went "Why? What would go wrong?"

They started telling me a whole bunch of different things, which I made a list of. One of the most important things that I got told was that the budget . . . when you budget for an event, it's never gonna be that budget. You always kind of have to have a backup kit. At the time for me, that was super important because I was just coming out of over half a million in debt. That's a different story, but we'll leave that out for the time being, but I wasn't cashed up. That was really

important information to have, cause obviously I hadn't done an event before. Having that spare money in a different account, just in case, like an insurance in case my budget was all messed up, was really important information. What I did was I made a list of all the things they had told me that would go wrong and I de-risked that. That was one of them.

The second one was the people that you decide to do this thing together with might suddenly not have the enthusiasm you have, and you gotta be ready to carry that enthusiasm because no one's gonna see it like you see it. Also very valuable information because when I thought of it—because I had three, four people that were like, “Yeah, let's do it. This is gonna be awesome. It's gonna be awesome for my business. It's gonna be awesome for your business.” Everyone was happy and then two months in one person dropped out, and then three months in another person dropped out. I was like, “All right. It's just me then. This is interesting.”

I think the other one was to make sure that I had some sort of a plan to create a campaign to sell the tickets. It was not like, tickets are on sale and deal with that.

I feel like the best thing I did at the time before getting anything else off the ground was having these conversations with people and seeing what they said as to why they didn't think it was a good idea for me to do it. I took each of those reasons, and I made a plan on how if things went totally sideways that I had a backup plan for those backup plans.

Pat Flynn:

Yeah. This is really smart, and this is why some of us who might be listening right now, you don't have access to people like that, well this is why I wanted Ronsley on the show to become that person. Although you can't ask him a question right now while your listening, hopefully that, through my own experience building this event, Flynn Con 1 in San Diego, that we're all thinking the same thing. I'm super thankful for that info Ronsley.

As far as the budget, the cool thing about an event from my perspective is, hey if I don't sell any tickets then I don't have to worry about anything. If I sell tickets then now I have the budget. I'm also learning that wow there's some things I have to either pay for or commit to pay for before I even sell the tickets. Can you talk a little bit about that dynamic and how you balance all that and just kinda live with it?

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah. 100 percent. In the build-up to 2015—October 2015 was the first year we did We Are Podcast, and that was probably my biggest year of growth, even though I was obviously going through a hard time in 2013 and 2014 with a failed business before that. When I got to 2015, the biggest growth was this event. It wasn't necessarily about the money because I had the same thoughts that went through my mind. I was like, "All right, I sell tickets." I had the budget, and I could go ahead. What was really driving me mental was that there were friends or business acquaintances or business partners that lent me the trust of their brand. They lent me the trust of their brand because I needed it because I did not have a trusted brand at the time.

It was new. It hadn't been done before. These people were like kind enough to go, "Yeah I'll support We Are Podcast. We'll partner with you. We'll lend our credibility to you." I was like, "What if I fail and I take all these guys down with me?" That was driving me mental. I had two fetal position moments in the build-up to We Are Podcast. I couldn't handle that. I could handle losing money. I could handle all that kinda stuff. I could not handle messing someone's brand up, who had spent years and years and tireless amount of effort trying to build that brand.

It's not necessarily about the money, but it is about the money as well because you still need the money to secure a venue. If you don't have a venue, how you gonna tell whoever you're gonna tell, here's where we're having it? Even if you put some money aside, you gotta start budgeting for the things that you don't necessarily see coming. In the first year, putting a deposit down on an event space was difficult because I knew that that was a line in the sand

and it was like the first payment, and once that payment came out there was no turning back, even though there was no turning back. It's a really weird thing that your brain goes through. The mental capacity to deal with an event is probably the biggest thing to consider when you're putting on an event, if that makes sense.

Pat Flynn: Totally. There are ways to run smaller events with less risk and less money needed up front. You could have a special deal with a local coworking spot and then sell tickets to a evening event. To gather people together and perhaps have a little conversation with a smaller group of people versus what we're talking about here with a much larger event, obviously you can start smaller and kind of grow it bigger out of that. But especially when you have the idea of a conference, especially the first podcasting conference in Australia, I mean, that's not really something you want to go small fry on.

Ronsley Vaz: No, and 100 percent Pat, and going . . . since that first year, I have not put down payment for a venue until tickets went on sale, but I did not know any better in year one, so you can still make those deals. Those deals are really important deals to make, like partnerships. In fact, when we started talking before this conversation and I was making a list, the first thing I wrote down was partnerships. I cannot emphasize how important partnerships are from a variety of angles. Partnerships allow you to boost your credibility. Partnerships allow you to have better distribution, Partnerships allow you to have a better variety of resources which you probably wouldn't get access to or you'd have to pay money to get access to.

Nowadays, I make my partnerships way before I need it. I think Jordan Harbinger says it really well: "Dig your well before you need the water," or something like that. For me, and I'm always looking for a win, win scenario, so if someone's putting on an event for the first time, 100 percent there's no need to put a deposit down. Find a way to partner because every business or every person wants something that you can possibly give them. The problem is that we're so caught up in our selfish world and our selfish bubble that we don't stop to think of what they might actually want, and kind of

twist our way into their lives by kind of pushing our agenda. I don't know whether that makes sense, but partnerships are so key. I feel we don't do them enough, and if someone's putting on an event for the first time, please look at the partnerships that you can create, because those are relationships that you can build for life.

Pat Flynn: These are partnerships between you as the event creator, and who else would this be? Other companies? Or would this be other people or colleagues in the space? Who exactly you're talking about?

Ronsley Vaz: I'm talking about other companies. Another business is always looking for access to people, they're looking for access . . . they're looking to be attached with something, So as an example in year one, I found a whole bunch of speakers that wanted to be part of the first podcasting conference in the southern hemisphere, and that was amazing, that was so phenomenal and that's why it was so hard for me because I'm like, "What if this is goes belly up, because all these great speakers . . ." and I had a great lineup in year one and touch wood, every year we've had a great lineup, but in year one to get that kind of lineup with no runs on the board was massive, and I was like, "Well, if all these speakers are giving me their brand, really for no runs on the board, then I need to find a way to show up."

I think it doesn't matter who would potentially want exposure. So catering companies, venue spaces, then you think about . . . actually what you should think about is, "Who else in my market does my clients see before they come to see me?" If you're a suit maker, and you probably say you make the best suits on the planet, you're not going to go and partner with other suit makers because you'll just become part of the same pool, but if you went and partnered with a high end watchmaker, a high end pen company, a high end wallet maker, then you suddenly have a whole suite of people that your client will see before they come and see you.

In a similar light, look at the partnership from that angle where, "Who else would benefit from being in the room with these people? Because these people would need those kind of people anyway,

how about I build my own tribe of partners that I know have the same values as I do, because that's what I stand for, that's my line, I won't cross that line, and these Partners won't cross that line either, so I'm doing the best for my people." Does that make sense?

Pat Flynn:

Yeah, I love that. I mean, I hadn't considered that an event is a platform, and when you have a platform with people, or hopefully people that might show up, other companies would want to get in front of that audience as well. Very similar to a podcast in the way that a podcast is an asset, a platform that you can leverage for certain partnerships and situations like that, which is really smart, so thank you for bringing that up. I hadn't considered that at this point yet.

Another important aspect of an event is the experience that your attendees are going to have. At what point in the process do you consider, "Okay, here's what's going to happen on day one, here's what's going to happen on day two." At what point in the process are you already thinking about that in this phase?

Ronsley Vaz:

I'm thinking about that from the time I kind of decide that the event is going to happen. So when we announced 2018, we announced it at 2017 and we kind of decided that it was going to be amplify, influence, and impact. Year one was growing an audience, and I knew that the whole theme around the day and a half was going to be around growing an audience and everything that I had in there was about how . . . and it was structured in that way on how to grow an audience in these different methods using a podcast or having a podcast as your platform, and I think that's really relevant to what you said Pat, because everything we are creating should be an asset and shouldn't be seen as a liability because if we'd seen that as a chore, "Oh, I've got to do this" then it tends to become that in our brain, which it tends to become that in reality too. So a podcast, a blog, an event, they're all assets.

I think what I did was . . . when I was having these conversations with these speakers, I was kind of going "Well, this is how I'd like . . . these are topics I'd like to cover, would you be able to fit whatever it

is that you are awesome at in these boundaries?” and then we would have a conversation and almost always, we’d find an angle that they had never spoken about before. So I love having speakers that have never spoken about such stuff before. It’s not, well . . . it’s not like they’ve done this ten, fifteen, twenty times before and they’re going to do it again. I love to use a stage as a testing ground for a new topic, but it all falls within that overarching compass of whatever the theme of the conference is going to be, because I kept thinking, “If a bunch of people come to an event, I don’t actually want them to have a bigger to-do list than they start off with. I don’t want them to be necessarily confused and not know what to do or feel like they have all this stuff to do, but don’t know where to start by attending the event,” so I tried as much as I could to tailor the day in a way that got them to do stuff over the days that when they finished, they actually felt like they accomplish something rather than just had a massive to do list, if that makes sense.

Pat Flynn:

That’s cool. Yeah, I like that. It’s very attendee-centric first, versus what I know a lot of other conferences do that I speak at. They’re just like, “Yeah, just whatever you want to speak about, we just want you there,” and to me that’s great because it’s easy for me as a speaker to go, “Oh okay, well I’ll do the one that I’ve done all the time that everybody loves,” which is great, but for an attendee it may or may not be the right thing for them, so I love that you have these sort of themes, and that’s the way we are definitely approaching FlynnCon. And having a theme, I mean the whole theme is press start, so it’s gonna be about starting something and the mindset and the actual actions that you need to take to do that, and everything is gonna be in around that.

Now the unique thing about my event is there’s not gonna be very many speakers. It’s actually mostly me and some of my family members, and some mystery guests that I am not going to reveal and you won’t know who they are until you’re there, which is really interesting, which I know some people might be like, “Well you’re just buying time Pat.” So, I don’t know, you can think whatever you want of that, but let’s say that you want to get speakers. How do you—especially when you were just starting out in year one—how

are you able to convince speakers to come? Do you pay them? It's a huge ask to go, "Hey, can you take three or four days out of your busy schedule to come to my event, to speak on stage, to spend time away from your family," and especially if you don't have a budget, "And I want you to do this for free." And you had mentioned this exposure, but it's exposure to a brand new event. How do you do that? How's that even possible?

Ronsley Vaz: I was pretty lucky, Pat. I had a podcast for I think a couple years before that, so I had interviewed all these amazing people before, so I kind of had a relationship a little bit, at least with a lot of them.

Pat Flynn: That's huge. Podcasts can do that.

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah. Everything around me Pat is because I started a podcast five years ago, everything around me, and I find that not even an . . . I'm not even exaggerating with that statement. We know each other because I had . . . I find that such a massive platform, and to be able to converse with someone for an hour or forty minutes or forty-five minutes is such a huge advantage, and I think that's what I've been able to create, these amazing relationships.

Also, I've been looking at other people and I see some people do this stuff online where they kind of just ask all the time. They don't build any relationship equity. There's no thought of, "What would that person want? What can I do for that person? How can I make that person feel special?" And I think everyone wants to feel special in one way or the other. We created the speaker retreats from year two, because it was a way to be able to give the speakers a safe place, even though I know that people will pay a lot of money to be at the speaker retreat, it's like a safe place for the speakers to hang out in each other's company with no agenda so that they can just be themselves, and hang out with similar kind of like-minded people, and so in year one . . . sorry to go back to your question on this tangent.

In year one, I had some kind of relationship, because of my podcast, with the speakers, and if I didn't, it was . . . one of the speakers said,

“Hey, this is Ronsley, he has gone from half a million in debt to debt free in two years and two months . . . I think that you should talk to him because he’s been able to do these amazing things,” and I would just get my foot in the door that way and from that I would just listen. I would not kind of go, “Hey, I’d like you to speak at my event.” I’d be, “Andrew introduced me, and I’m putting on this event, but I would like to know how things are going, I read up all about you. I’ve done this research, I liked your last couple of interviews, or podcast episodes you put on, how did you do this, in this space?” And I still do that. By no means am I the guru, because I know that every time I learn a little bit more about podcasting, about events, about business, about entrepreneurship. I realize there is a bigger list of stuff that I don’t know. So right from the beginning, I kind of went, “I’d love to have this conversation, you’ve been around for a longer time than I have, and you’ve done all these cooler things than I have, I’d love to be able to . . . if you could give me one piece of advice, and I can take that away that would be massive for me, and it doesn’t mean that you speak at the event, but if it means that you speak at the event that’s even better.” If that makes sense. I detached from the outcome and I was purely there to be present, if that helps.

Pat Flynn: It does, thank you. What are some things that you, in your second year were saying to yourself in terms of, “Okay, we are not going to do that again like last year.” What are some big takeaways from your first year that you then made some changes for year number two?

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, that bigger wasn’t better.

Pat Flynn: What do you mean by that?

Ronsley Vaz: Because every time someone asked me about an event, they didn’t want to know what the event was about or who spoke or what kind of topics we covered. They will immediately kind of go, “How many people?” And how many people equaled a better event or a worst event, so I knew from after year one that I wanted to break the idea in general around anywhere that bigger wasn’t better, and the more number of people you have doesn’t make you more successful,

and I think I did that on purpose. I haven't looked at my podcast stats in, I don't know, I'm pretty sure over a year now. Primarily my team does all that kind of stuff, but I don't necessarily want that to determine my success. But I think it's a weird way of thinking, but I just don't want to be in the same bucket, so I decided that I would reduce the numbers and cap them in year two, and we've done that from year two, three, and four, and just find a way to get better quality people in the room.

That was the big decision in year two, was not to go, "Oh, we had 250 people in year one let's go 400 or 500 in year two," it was, "I'm capping it at 175 in year two, and that made a huge difference in terms of the conversations in the room and that impact of the attendees following the event. I know attendees that came to We Are Podcast 2016 that are still really, really good friends, so for me that was huge, that was a big decision which I didn't know which side that would go on.

The second decision that I made in year two and in year three was that I would not focus on sponsors at all, because we did that in year one and I was kind of spread between sponsors and attendees, and I felt like I couldn't get either one of those right, and I felt like I needed to get one part right before I went and did the other part.

Pat Flynn: What do you mean that you were spread between the two?

Ronsley Vaz: My attention was spread between the two. My attention was spread between getting money from sponsors versus actually putting on a good event, and I wanted to put on a good event first, get that down right, before I went in and focused on sponsors, and this year we went and focused on sponsors, but two and three, we did not have any sponsors.

Pat Flynn: When you say, "We want this event to be good", can you define that for us? Like what does that mean to you?

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, I really, for me I want the attendees to kind of feel like this

event changed their life. I want that to be a pivotal point, where when they're telling their story ten years from now they kind of go, "I went to We Are Podcast 2015, or 2016, or 2017, and I met this person," or "I had this conversation," or "I had this light bulb moment, and if I wasn't in that room, the next ten years would've been very different." So for me, I'm always trying to create that environment, where someone can be open and vulnerable enough to actually talk about where their obstacles are so that they can actually overcome them. Because a lot of us in business put on this front as to what's happening really, and I think just creating that safe space is super important for me.

Pat Flynn: That's awesome. Sorry, I just have a lot of these questions pop up in my head as we're talking.

Ronsley Vaz: That's cool.

Pat Flynn: Hidden costs. I know that I'm gonna be running into some of those as well, and I'd love to hear from you, what were some surprising things cost-wise and budget-wise? Things that weren't planned for that you now know and want to share with all of us, so that we don't get caught in the same traps, if any?

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, year one we got a bill of like \$5,200 two months after the event from the AV company, which I did not know existed at the venue place. So the venue said, "This is all included," and then there was a separate company that did the AV for that venue, and I'm like, "I didn't know about this, I did not sign off on this, of any of this stuff." And Pat, that was just a nightmare, because in year one we did not make money from the event. In fact, we lost money and then on top of that we got this \$5,000 bill. What they did was diabolical, in the sense that they started contacting the speakers and saying that, you know, "There's this event that you spoke at, and—"

Pat Flynn: Oh my god.

Ronsley Vaz: "Our bill is not being cleared." And I'm like, "Oh no!"

- Pat Flynn: They reached out to the speakers. That's crazy.
- Ronsley Vaz: Yeah. And it was. That was just not cool, so I ended up paying the bill.
- Pat Flynn: No! You did?
- Ronsley Vaz: Yeah. Primarily because I didn't want the speakers to be—
- Pat Flynn: Harassed, yeah.
- Ronsley Vaz: Yeah. It was just not fair for that to happen, but I now always, when I go to a venue I kind of go, "So is the AV included? Does someone else do your AV? What does that include?" And I talk about the AV almost first. So, that's a hidden cost that I did not see coming.
- Pat Flynn: So that's the AV, the audio-visual crew.
- Ronsley Vaz: Yep, yep, the audio-visual. Yep.
- Pat Flynn: So I guess the big lesson there is when you sign a contract and you make a deal with a hotel space, really understand the ins and out of that. And I know it can be difficult, I mean, I'm already seeing the fine print and all that stuff, it's like, "Wow, okay. I really have to make sure I know what's going on here," and it's a big task.
- But you had said that the hotel had said that it was covered, but it wasn't. I guess it wasn't in the contract. I mean, to me it's like, the hotel should've paid for that if that's what they said, but I guess you—
- Ronsley Vaz: Yes. Yeah, but I did not really—what was happening was, I think that they knew where the weak spot was, which was I did not actually want all these people to be harassed as a result of me putting on this event, and when that started happening I just gave in. But I would've been stubborn, really there are, were most occasions that would've been me being stubborn and standing my ground, but I just decided that was just not worth it at the time.
- Pat Flynn: It's an expensive lesson, right?

- Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, totally expensive lesson. At the time especially, because it was, you know, just when [Amplify](#), the agency was starting as well, so yeah, it was an expensive lesson.
- I think also finding out about food and catering and how you want to approach that, being totally clear with your attendees what exactly they're getting.
- Pat Flynn: And it's safe to assume that food can be very expensive at these places?
- Ronsley Vaz: 100 percent. Food can be probably the most expensive, because they obviously find a way, they can say to you stuff like, "Oh, we'll not charge your room higher, but you buy food for all your attendees." And you think you're getting a great deal, but it's not necessarily a great deal because you're still gonna be spending way more money. So actually look at how much they're talking about, how that makes a difference, whether sometimes it's actually worth paying the room higher and finding another way to cover food, because if you go through a hotel, they've got hotel prices.
- Pat Flynn: It's like forty, fifty dollars per lunch per person or something like that, for just like a sandwich? I've seen that a couple times. I'm like, "This is crazy."
- Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, seventy-two dollars or something, I remember that quote very clearly. "Oh, that's for lunch." And I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" But yeah. 100 percent.
- Pat Flynn: So food and making sure that the contracts, the AV things are good. What about other sort of smaller things that could potentially add up, like I'm thinking SWAG and name tags and like, what are some of those smaller things that perhaps you've put into your event that maybe are worth the extra cost because they just add to the experience? Let's talk about some of those things that maybe you don't have to spend money on, but you do because you know it just adds to things.

Ronsley Vaz: Yes. So having a media wall or a place, like a place that actually helps someone take images, which boosts your brand as well as the brand of the event as well as the brand of the speakers, is massive.

Pat Flynn: Oh that's cool.

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, because year one, one of the best things about We Are Podcast is every year it's trending number one on Twitter for both the main days. Which, again, I have to put it down to having your swag around the place or having signs that people can use, so we just had, we had podcast signs that were about a, not an A3, maybe an A2 size, so four times an A4 paper, if that's a better description of how big that is. And just a bunch of those around the place, so people were just holding the signs up and taking pictures and posting them, which was really cool. And then last year we had these We Are Podcast speech-bubble squeegee balls, which was also a hit, and then having a media wall and having a place where they could say to the speakers, "Hey, I'd love to get a picture with you at the media wall."

Pat Flynn: That's cool.

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, those are worth whatever money you spend on them, because it gets you this crazy reach.

Pat Flynn: So branding is important obviously, and having your brand around and having it be shared, encouraging people to take pictures, those kinds of things. I've also seen a lot of conferences run contests around those things, which, you know, they do giveaways knowing that their brand is getting exposure in that way too.

Dude, there's so much we could talk about, obviously, and there's only so much time here on the show, but the one thing I want to finish off with, and this is just at least a great starting point for a lot of people I think, for things to consider—so again thank you for coming on and sharing all this. But the final thing is, like, okay, you are Ronsley, you want to put on this event. You need to likely have other people helping you run this thing and put it on. Who all is

involved in making We Are Podcast happen? And you don't have to mention names specifically if you don't want to, but what are their roles and how much of the work is you? Because I'm also afraid that like, okay, I'm gonna be so concerned about how smooth FlynnCon 1 is run, and that's, you know, but I also have some presentations I need to give, and making sure that I deliver on my performances and whatnot. So, like, how does that all get balanced? Who's helping you behind the scenes?

Ronsley Vaz: That's a great question, Pat. There have been years where I've been really disappointed with my team and there've been years where I've not had to do anything. So to put a bit of context around 2015, 2016, and 2017, I would say that it's primarily me putting all the people in the room, or it has been, at least, from the speakers to the attendees. And in year one I decided that I was gonna emcee as well. That was not a good idea. That was just a rubbish idea. And I realized I'm a bad emcee.

So I think there was some really important people that came along and helped me. One was someone to just have my back in case I went down, because in year one, about three o'clock I just couldn't take it anymore. I needed to go and have my introvert moment in my room, and I just needed someone to help and take over. So, that was year one.

Year two I had Emma Samir, who has been with Amplify ever since, and she's just amazing. So she handled all the logistics, and I had the best year in 2016 where I got to hang out with the speakers, with the attendees, and I actually had a lot of fun.

Year three was probably our most successful year in terms of return on investment, in terms of impact that we made towards Free to Shine, and all that kind of stuff. And I had a team of six people from Amplify, but I felt like I was still the one running around on the day, because the team did not have the eye for the event the way I wanted the event to go down. Saying all that, in 2017 we had Janice who was my speaker coordinator when I gave my TEDx talk last year, and she ran the whole TEDx event this year. She's like, "I

would love to work at Amplify. Do you have an opening?" And she's come on board, so she's handling the entire logistics of the event, which is really, really helpful.

So having someone to run the logistics and the admin side of things, like having someone to run the speaker contracts and making sure that the speakers are well taken care of, is super important. On the day, having volunteers, and you can contact a local university to get students who are going through an event course to help out and you can get them all for free. Finding those ways to have people around you to do the jobs, but also plan, plan, plan as much as you possibly can, because you should not necessarily be stressing out or doing any work two or three days before the event. You should just be relaxing—

Pat Flynn: I'm scared.

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, no, we've done that from year one, Pat. So it's like—and every year I keep adding to that. I kind of go, "All right, so last year we did three days off. This year's four days off." And then we did five days off, so this year we're actually gonna be off for a whole week before the event, hopefully, fingers crossed. Just so that you calm down and you can actually enjoy the journey and enjoy what's to come, rather than just be running around.

Pat Flynn: Yeah. I don't want it to be like my wedding. Like, I loved my wedding, I remember bits and pieces of it, but the reason I say that is because there was just so much happening on that day, and so much it just was a blur.

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, yeah.

Pat Flynn: But we had spent a whole year planning it, and all of a sudden it's gone and I'm like, "I didn't even get a chance to have dinner because I had to go around to all the tables." Anyway, I just don't want it to be something that, like—I want to live in the moment at the event too, and enjoy it, and I know that if I can enjoy it, everybody else there will be enjoying it as well.

So, dude, this has been incredibly helpful for me, and I know everybody else listening too, and even if you're not thinking about an event in the near future, perhaps you might come back to this episode in the future, or at least have some thoughts for an event that you might be attending in the future, and can pass on some suggestions to make your experience at that event better in the future.

So, dude, thank you so much. And I know that for people listening to this right now, they may have missed me in Australia at We Are Podcast 2018, but there is a way to get and catch the lessons and the talks that were happening there at that time, and I believe there's a virtual ticket that if people wanted to go and check it out—And you can see me onstage and a number of other speakers too, in the podcasting space. Where might they go to grab that, and I believe you had mentioned there was like, some sort of code that people could go to get a little bit of a discount on that if they wanted to check it out?

Ronsley Vaz: Yeah, WeArePodcast.com/2018 will be the link, and I've been listening to SPI for long enough to know that we all love a Pat deal, so we've created a Pat deal only for Pat people. If you put the code in—"IknowPat"—you'll get a 25 percent discount as well as all the previous three years of recordings from We Are Podcast.

Pat Flynn: That's awesome, and that includes John Lee Dumas from last year, and a number of other people that have been on the show before. Jordan Harbinger. It's great. I'm honored to go and speak later for you, and obviously by the time people listen to this I will have already done so, and I'm excited to share the event with people in this way. So if you want to check it out, WeArePodcast.com/2018, use the coupon code "IknowPat" and you'll get a discount and access to all the event recordings from all the previous years.

So thank you for that Ronsley, and obviously, 2019's coming around the corner. If you want to check out We Are Podcast 2019, information will be at that link too, so WeArePodcast.com/2018.

Dude, thank you so much man. I appreciate you, super helpful, and good luck with everything.

Ronsley Vaz: Thank you Pat. I'm looking forward to hanging out with you next month, or the month after.

Pat Flynn: It'll be fun.

All right, I hope you enjoyed that interview with Ronsley. Again, you can find the recordings from the show that just happened in Australia, We Are Podcast 2018, if you go to WeArePodcast.com/2018. You can check it out there and also make sure you use the coupon code, all one word, "IknowPat", and that will get you 25 percent off plus access to all the other recordings from previous years, and so a great opportunity for those of you who couldn't make it but want to get that info.

So yeah, check that out: WeArePodcast.com/2018.

Now, that link and all the other links and resources mentioned in this particular episode will be available on the show notes page on the SPI blog. To go there, all you need to do is go to SmartPassiveIncome.com/session342. One more time, that's SmartPassiveIncome.com/session342. And thank you again for listening all the way through, I appreciate you so much.

If you have a moment, [leave a review on iTunes](#) for the Smart Passive Income podcast, that would be extremely helpful, and make sure you hit that subscribe button if you haven't already, because we have a lot of great episodes coming your way. A lot of guests who have never been on the show before, and some who have. Make sure to stick around, because it's gonna be great.

Hit subscribe, and I'll see you the next episode. Cheers.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income Podcast, at www.SmartPassiveIncome.com!



SHOW NOTES: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session342>

RESOURCES: [We Are Podcast 2018](#)

[FlynnCon 1](#)

[Amplify](#)

