



**SPI 352**

# How Powerhouse YouTuber Marques Brownlee (A.K.A. MKBHD) Grew His Massive Brand

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Pat Flynn: What's up Team Flynn? Welcome to not just The Smart Passive Income Podcast, but also 2019! Happy New Year to all of you, and I got a special treat for you today to kick off the year here on the podcast, a special guest, Marques Brownlee. You might also know him as MKBHD, that's his handle on [YouTube](#), on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), everywhere else.

And if you don't know who this is, Marques is a big time YouTuber and tech reviewer, and has become very big in the media lately. He's interviewed people like Elon Musk. He has videos that reach millions even after just a day, and a YouTube channel of over seven and a half million.

And he's a big inspiration to me, so this was quite an honor to interview him, and to have him on the show with us to not just talk about his origin story and his humble beginnings—which in and of itself is very inspiring—but how he's been able to kind of develop his own style, to how he's been able to stay in his lane, collaborate with others, deal with the growing pains that come with businesses, and also how we as creators can make sure that we give ourselves the best chance to succeed no matter what size you are at now and what niche you are in.

So, we're going to kick off the year right. Just sit back, relax, and queue the intro 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—he still watches TED talks to get better at speaking in public—Pat Flynn!

Pat Flynn: This is Session 352 of The Smart Passive Income Podcast. If you don't know who I am, my name is Pat Flynn, here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. Like I said, today we have a special guest, Marques Brownlee, MKBHD, and I'm just not going to make you wait any longer. We're just going to dive right in. Here we go.

Marques, welcome to The Smart Passive Income Podcast, thank you so much for being here today. I appreciate you, man.

Marques B.: Thanks for having me on.

Pat Flynn: This is amazing because this interview happened as a result of a tweet that was shared, then a number of people who apparently follow both of us had said that this needs to happen because, you know, magic will happen. So, I hope we can offer them what they expect out of this.

But first all, just want to say thank you so much for taking the time. I know you're a busy guy. You have an amazing YouTube channel, [MKBHD](#), you do tech review videos, and you do them in the highest quality I've ever seen, which is largely a reason why you are where you're at today.

But before we get into a lot of what we can do to inspire others out there, I'd love to dive into your origin story a little bit. Tell us about your first videos. I know you started on YouTube around the same time I did, 2008, 2009. Tell me about your first videos, why did you shoot them, and what were they like?

Marques B.: Sure. Well, thanks for the intro, I appreciate it.

So the beginning of the channel, I would say, usually goes back to, well, I was in high school, and I was making a big tech purchase—so I was trying to buy a laptop. And so, the story there was I had watched a bunch of videos to try to decide what laptop to buy. You know, should I get this MacBook, this HP, this Dell? Bunch of YouTube videos, and I finally decided on one, made that purchase.

Once I'd made that purchase, I got the laptop, and I realized there was a bunch of things I didn't know about it that I wish I had known when I was actually making that choice. So, I decided to make a couple videos, just simple screencasts showing those things, uploaded them to YouTube so that if someone else found

themselves in my shoes, trying to make a big purchase choice, they knew more about that laptop. So, that's the very first video, was me talking through one of the accessories that came with the laptop that I didn't know about.

Pat Flynn: And was that kind of scary for you, to create your first videos? Or had you ever been trained on creating videos? What was your approach with that first one?

Marques B.: Never was trained on it. Definitely, I think, picked up a lot when I was watching all those videos that came before. So, watched a lot of screen cast, watched a lot of, back in the day what I would consider established YouTubers who were doing their thing, they had their own style. And I think watching enough of that I sort of picked up on it, so by the time I decided to make my own I kind of knew what I was getting myself into and was able to put my own twist on it and have some fun with it.

Pat Flynn: When you published those first videos, and you got your first sort of views, at which point were you like, "oh, this is really cool, I'm going to continue to do more of these?"

Marques B.: I actually . . . I would have done it anyway. I think that there was a lot of points you can point to where you realize, oh, there's an audience, and timely information matters, and all that stuff. But I made my first 100 or so videos for less than 100 people. So, I think it was just kind of a fun thing I enjoyed doing. And at that time, obviously, YouTube's much smaller, much earlier, and I kind of had the benefit of not . . . I was in high school. I didn't really have to worry about whether or not it was sustainable, or whether or not I was doing the right thing. It was just a hobby that I found a lot of joy in.

But, of course, there were many more moments afterwards where you sort of realize, oh, there's an audience here. You kind of bring people back in who have seen previous videos, so you establish your own style, that sort of thing, and it grew from that.

Pat Flynn: Was there a specific moment early on that you remember like, “wow, this could be something big, maybe I should devote more time and energy into this?”

Marques B.: I think . . . So, one moment that comes to mind was . . . and I’ve talked about this before, when I did a bunch of screen casts. So they were literally just recording software of my screen.

Pat Flynn: Your face wasn’t there at all.

Marques B.: My face wasn’t even there, it was just my voice, and my mouse, and my wallpaper. And there was a day that Safari, the web browser, came to windows. And so, the day that that happened I was really excited about it. I made a whole video, how to download it, how to get set up, bring in your old bookmarks, all that sort of thing.

And the next day I woke up to that video having thousands of views instead of a few dozen, so way more than people who were even subscribed to the channel. I think that was kind of a light bulb moment of like, oh, well, I guess people are searching for this type of thing, so there’s an audience to be had, and people care about timely information like this.

Pat Flynn: You know, there’s a lot of people . . . And, you know, I especially . . . You know, there’s a lot of kids listening to this show right now, and who follow me, and I’m always thinking about them, you know?

And my son, he’s eight, and he goes to a STEM school, and they talk about technology quite a bit. You ask kids at that school what they want to be when they grow up, and they all say they want to be a YouTuber. They want to be like you. They want to do what you do, whether it’s tech or, likely, video games, Fortnite, Minecraft, you know, all those players too.

What would you recommend to a kid who sees what you do and they are at that start? They are just getting started with YouTube, and they see the millions of views that you and many others have, yet they’re creating videos like you did in the past, and they’re only

getting a dozen views every episode and, you know, it's kind of disheartening sometimes. And I know that personally as well. How would you encourage that person to just keep going, just like you did?

Marques B.: Yeah, I would say . . . I mean, the place I'm in now, I guess, probably looks really glamorous, but there is a long road to get to where the channel is, and there was also a number of factors that I was both really lucky and fortunate to be able to have go my way between 2008 and now that have resulted in the channel that you see today, and the videos you get to watch, one of those things being, when I started it wasn't with the goal of making it a career, and the views per video and things like, that didn't necessarily matter. So I was able to decide, whether there were views or not, that I was going to keep making videos anyway.

And I think if you're in a position at the beginning where you're really disheartened and discouraged by maybe not getting the views that you want, maybe think twice about if you're enjoying the videos in the first place. You really have to enjoy putting in the time, because you see . . . you might see a five minute result as a finished video, but there are many hours that go into making a video like that, that does really well.

So, you have to actually enjoy that process, and have a lot of fun making videos, and going into tech, to actually get to reap those rewards, and that's something you have to think about if you're just getting started.

Pat Flynn: I like that a lot. I like that you said it was lucky that you didn't go into this with the purpose of turning it into a career. It's funny, because a lot of us do do this so that we can turn it into a career, which is often something that would actually stop us from doing and achieving the success that we want, which is really interesting.

You had also said that there were some other lucky moments, or quote "lucky moments," and I don't think that was lucky, I think it was just . . . made sense, and there's a reason why you're here

today, is because you just kept creating, and you were consistent. What other lucky moments, if you will, happened along the way for you to get here?

Marques B.: Yeah, I mean, I guess . . . So that the time that I was starting on YouTube there's obviously a couple different genres, or niches, you could say, tech on YouTube being one of the smallest. So I think I remember when I'm starting there are maybe three or four of the tech YouTubers, creators, that today everyone already knows them, everyone's familiar with the beginnings, and the 2008, 2009 videos.

And I have the luck of actually getting on their radar, and being able to sort of follow in their footsteps, and they sort of enabled a lot of what I do now, that established that people are actually willing to watch tech videos on YouTube. So that was fortunate timing.

And also the fact that I'm young, and at that time in high school and getting into college, didn't really have a whole lot of expenses, so anything that I made back from the channel I was able to put right back into it, buy a new mouse, buy a new laptop cooler, a new accessory, and do videos on that. So, those type of things, where I didn't really have to worry too much about it being a career.

Pat Flynn: Was that initial income that was coming in from the channel, was that simply coming from YouTube ads, and AdSense, and those kinds of things?

Marques B.: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, all straight up literally, like, the YouTube Partner Program was something you had to apply to get accepted into back at that time. So I remember specifically applying, getting denied. And once you get denied I think there was a six month period where you're not allowed to apply again. So you had to really know you were going to get in. And then I was denied, I waited six months, I applied again, was denied again. Waited six months, applied again, was denied again. Waited six months, and then was invited. So . . .

Pat Flynn: Interesting, okay.

Marques B.: It was a weird . . . Yeah, it was a sort of a long process of obviously literally making no money, but continuing to make the videos, because that part was fun.

Pat Flynn: I think that persistence is really key. A lot of success stories that we know about, JK Rowling, her books were rejected by many publishers. My favorite movie, Back to the Future, was rejected by twenty different studios before it finally turned into my favorite movie of all time. And there's many examples of that, Rovio and Angry Birds being the fifty-second game that they ever created, and nobody knows about the first fifty-one games.

But that persistence is key, I think, and that's something that you've always done. And along those same lines you've been very consistent with your content, and now your style. I want to talk about that consistency a little bit, because I know from diving into YouTube this past year and becoming friends with many other YouTubers who are experts in the space, consistency is key, and huge.

And so, your publishing schedule, and especially now with how great your videos are, and the kind of attention that you're getting, how do you stay consistent and continue to keep up the quality that you've been putting out?

Marques B.: Yeah, I guess, personally, it comes from me being my own biggest critic, so that's number one. I guess the videos . . . The whole point of the channel has sort of evolved into I want to make videos that I would want to watch, and that sort of stepped into I want to make a channel that I would want to subscribe to. So that sort of incorporates things like upload frequency.

I don't really have a schedule for uploading. I really literally just start the next video once the current one's done. So, I'm editing a video today. Once that one's done, it will go live, and then I'll start working

on the next one.

And that's, again, a really fortunate position to be in, because a lot of people find themselves in a position where you kind of are forced to make a certain amount of videos to keep up with the schedule, or to keep up with YouTube's algorithm's preferences, things like that. So again, really, really glad to be in a position where I get to pick and choose.

But that's also put me in a position where I'm just happy to make every single video I make, where every topic that comes up, I really want to make a video about it. So, I kind of lean into my favorite topics and devices, and just get to go all-in on them.

Pat Flynn:

I love that, and I know one of your favorite topics is Tesla. I'm a fellow Tesla owner, and you got to interview Elon Musk. I do want to dive into that in a little bit.

But I . . . You said something. You want to make videos in the way that you would want to watch and subscribe to a channel. Can you define for us what that is, so that when we go to your channel we can actually see those things kind of being implemented? What does that mean to you?

Marques B.:

Yeah, I mean, there's a . . . I think there's a visual style that's sort of—first and foremost it's a video, so you kind of associate the channel with quality video. And I think the sort of overkill of production quality that you see started off kind of as a . . . it wasn't the focus of the videos, it was like an extra thing because that was a hobby and I just really enjoy production.

And then it turned into, well, this is actually pretty valuable, to . . . showing things as realistically as possible. So any time you see an angle of me talking about a phone with the phone in my hand, you'll see like, a first person view as if you're holding the phone. And these are all things that are sort of helping someone who's in a purchase decision, trying to decide if they want to buy a device or not. So, first person shots, a continuous flow from shot to shot and

point to point, a sort of steady organization of points.

And there's other things with style, like a lot of people do in-video ads. I try to avoid those, because I don't like watching them, and they sort of interrupt the flow of the video. So, lots of things like that. And when you watch back a video you'll notice lots of little tweaks and things that stay consistent from video to video.

Pat Flynn: I love that. Your production schedule, I'm curious; so there's a new tech that just came out, or let's just pretend like, I am a company and I invented something, and I want you to review it. And I'm sure you get hit up many, many times a single day for people wanting you to mention their stuff.

So, whether or not you would share this product that I hypothetically have or not, beyond that question, just like, what is your approach? I give this to you, you're interested in it, what is your production for that particular product, and how to give your audience the kind of best review you can for it?

Marques B.: Yeah, so I guess a big part of the channel is reviews, and there's other types of videos that are showcasing tech, or maybe doing countdowns, or current events, and things like that. But for a review, generally I get a device in my hands, I integrate it in my daily life as best as I possibly can, as if it's the newest purchase, and once I've used it . . . You know, if it's a phone, I'm taking notes on it in the notes app, and I'm writing down things as I notice them.

And once it's been a week or two and I've sort of accumulated all these points that are worth talking about, and I've come to a conclusion, then I go into production mode and I write these things down. I reorder them, I sort of put them in a way that's . . . I feel is thorough, and that would make a good, complete review. And then I sort to go into production mode and get the camera out.

Pat Flynn: I love that. Every review you've done, and I watch plenty of them, trust me, they always feel very honest, and very authentic, because it does seem like you are using the thing as if we would be using it

too. I think that's a big struggle, especially in my industry, which is more online business, where it's very easy to recommend another product and get an affiliate link for it. You can say whatever you want, but sometimes it comes across very disingenuous because you don't actually use the thing.

And that's one thing I try to teach my audience is if you're going to recommend something, actually use it so you can honestly . . . you can get to the point where you could support somebody with it if they have questions, which if you do then obviously they're going to look to you for that link or whatever. And you've done that very, very well.

You do have other videos, like you said. [My recent favorite](#) one was about YouTube Rewind, which you were featured in. I thought that that was a very honest, great take on it.

And for those of you who don't know what YouTube Rewind is, it's sort of a, YouTube partners with a company to create a really great video, or that's the hope, that will celebrate some of the year's best video and the video creators. And, you know, I've watched them since 2016, and I thought 2016 was great. 2017 was kind of over the top. And then this year was just kind of ridiculous, and you were featured in it. Will Smith opened with mentioning your name, and all this crazy stuff. Like, it was set out to be good, but they had . . . well, they had good intentions, but it just didn't perform very well.

And what I thought was really cool about that video was there was no tech that you were reviewing. There was no fancy camera angles or anything like this. You just told your opinion, and people really resonated with it. You were just very honest, and I think that a lot of times online we could just do more videos like that.

I did a video like that based on what somebody said about the word passive income, talking about Gary Vaynerchuk, and that video exploded because it was about just my thoughts. And I think that a lot of us who are entrepreneurs especially, just starting out, we struggle with realizing that we have thoughts that matter, and how

or when did that start to happen for you?

So beyond just the tech stuff, when did you start to use your platform for sharing your thoughts, and hopefully helping people with their own thoughts as a result?

Marques B.: I would actually say that came fairly recently. I started doing, I think about a year and a half ago, a monthly Q&A series. And so, the sort of interesting part of doing a Q&A, you start to get repeat questions, and people month to month asking the same sort of thing. What's your middle name? How tall are you? What's your favorite color? Like, you kind of have to keep it fresh, so you're looking towards things like current events, new products, and it's not always tech.

And I found that a lot of the most interesting things to talk about that weren't tech got the most engagement in the comments and people talking. People asking about music, and I would share my Spotify playlist, and suddenly, "oh, I actually like your taste in music. "That's nothing to do with tech, but that's kind of interesting. And the more personable things like that kind of were fun to share and talk to people about. You find you're connecting about more than just tech with people.

And so, I've done those, and ironically last month was the first month I haven't done one in about fifteen months. So I just stopped doing the monthly Q&As because it kind of felt forced. But on the other hand, I'm now doing more videos on just topics, and my thoughts, and maybe sometimes I can offer a unique perspective on a topic or a current event.

So with that YouTube Rewind video, it was literally just, I've seen a lot of people talking about Rewind that weren't in it, and I feel like because of my perspective of actually talking to the director, being in the production, seeing what their intent was versus the actual video, that's something I haven't seen online, let me share that, too. And that's something that was sort of born from having a lot of conversations with people in the audience about just stuff we think about.

Pat Flynn: That's really cool, and that's another thing that you do really well that I try to emulate, which is having conversations with my audience. I do that on my website, try to do it through the podcast.

But through YouTube and your channels, you do a very good job of communicating, and listening and responding to your people, and you've built this amazing brand because of that. What are some ways that you manage your community that allow for you to show up despite having seven and a half million subscribers, and a ton of attention in, you know, the same 24 hours that we all do?

Marques B.: Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of . . . obviously there's a couple main platforms that I'm talking back and forth to people. Twitter is a great one because I literally just read through the timeline. So, it doesn't matter if you're another YouTuber, or you have something random to say, chances are pretty good I'll see it. And if it's an interesting point, I might respond back to it, and then it might get some attention there.

But I think YouTube comments are interesting, because obviously I can't reply to everyone. There's 1,000 comments in an hour. I can't reply to them all. But if I read a lot of them I can get a pretty good idea of which sentiments are most common, and which are less.

And let's say it's a review on a device, and the first couple thousands comments have mostly the same sort of sentiment about I really like the camera in this phone, or I really don't like the battery in this phone. Or maybe I really like or don't like something about this video. Then I can pick one of those to reply to, and it sort of surfaces its way to the top. And without replying to everyone's comment, it sort of feels like I've addressed a lot of people instead of just one person, from replying publicly. So that's kind of one way; you reply publicly to something that a lot of people have said, then many of those people see the answer to their question.

Pat Flynn: Does MKBHD have haters, or trolls?

Marques B.: Yeah. Yeah, I would say. It's obviously a massive minority. The vast majority of people are super nice, especially when it comes to tech videos. And tech can be this brutal fan versus fan type of thing. If you like this phone and you don't like the other phone it can get pretty brutal, but there's always people who are firmly in their camps.

Pat Flynn: What's a piece of tech you would love to review that you haven't reviewed yet?

Marques B.: I feel like I've actually . . . There's a lot of, like, the behind the scenes production gear. This is one of the things, like, I talk about a lot of high end phones, and a lot of the comments I get are, "well, I kind of want to know what the \$600, \$500 phones are like." And I'm so busy with all the flagships from every company, and the best they can offer, that I struggle to get to those lower price phones. So, it feels weird reviewing a \$70,000 camera, because no one's also looking to buy that, you know what I mean?

So there's a lot of video gear that I think is incredible, and I think there's this little tweak that I'd love to tell the company is a little better, but I hardly ever do videos about my production gear because there's almost nobody in the same purchase decision mode that I was in, which is kind of unfortunate, but that's just the way it is. There's not as many people looking to buy the mics, and amps, and camera gear and stuff.

Pat Flynn: That makes sense. How about any thoughts or interest in kind of emerging technologies such as AI, and that kind of thing?

Marques B.: Yeah, emerging is a good word, because it's still early for a lot of that stuff. I've been . . . I think AI and VR specifically is something I've been looking into more, but basically my job is mostly looking at finished products. So, you know, different companies just sort of trying to figure out the best use for this new technology, packaging it, and making a product out of it, and then selling it. By the time I get there, it's that finished product.

But I'm still interested in the process of deciding what becomes a product. But yeah, I do tend to look at the finished product.

Pat Flynn: I would imagine that would be a big problem for . . . or just one of things that you . . . you have so much power with your channel now that you could . . . you know, when you mention something, it could explode, or it could ruin a company, perhaps. What does it feel like to have that kind of power? How do you . . . You know, with great power comes great responsibility, so how do you stay responsible?

Marques B.: I stay responsible by staying truthful. So, I think, you know, you use a product for a couple weeks, or a couple days, you kind of get a pretty good idea of what's real and what's not. And people like to talk about, ah, well, you don't want to say too many bad things about a company, because then you might ruin it.

But if the things you're saying that are bad about a product are true, someone was going to say it anyway. Like, it was going to surface anyway. So I don't really feel too bad when I'm actually saying true things, or giving actual, real constructive criticism when they need it. So I try to just give the whole truth, and then nothing but the truth. And if that's helpful for a company, then that means they made a good product.

Pat Flynn: And I'm sure even if you told the truth, and it wasn't necessarily the truth they would want to hear, it would still be helpful to them.

Marques B.: Yep, exactly.

Pat Flynn: And hopefully they would pivot, or make a change, or—

Marques B.: That's happened before. I've given . . . Especially in smartphone reviews, because you can push a software update to fix bugs, and software quirks, and things like that. I've talked negatively about cameras, for example, and they would come along, and they'll grab my sample photos, and they'll push a software update, and they look better in the next one for everyone who uses the phone.

- Pat Flynn: That's incredible. In addition to the AdSense and the ad revenue that comes from your videos, what other mechanisms for income generation are sort of up there for you?
- Marques B.: Yeah, I'd say primary would be . . . obviously the ads on the videos would be one, which is just AdSense. We have . . . As of this year we have a merch store, which is one of the things I'm reppin' right now.
- Pat Flynn: Where can I get those . . . Like, where should we go to find that?
- Marques B.: Yeah, there's a store. There's [Shop.MKBHD.com](http://Shop.MKBHD.com), and that is everything. And we have all kinds of new designs every couple weeks. That's actually been surprisingly fun, trying to design interesting stuff that's not too tech, but like, normal people could wear, you could get it as a gift for mom and dad, stuff like that. So that's a pretty big one.
- And then the very rare in-video or channel sponsor-type of integration would, I guess, be third. And that's the majority of it.
- Pat Flynn: You say very rare. I would assume that the opportunities aren't very rare.
- Marques B.: You're right.
- Pat Flynn: Are they rare because of your choice?
- Marques B.: Yeah.
- Pat Flynn: How do you choose?
- Marques B.: Right. It comes down to what I would want to watch, and a big part of that is actually getting to use a product if I can talk positively about it. So, this has happened many, many times in the last couple weeks and months, where I'll get an offer to do a sponsored bit about some product, and I've never used the product. And my first response is usually, "if you'd like to send the product first, and let me try it, then I'll decide yes or no." Usually that gets a yes, and the product gets sent, and then I can decide at that point. If they say no,

then they missed out.

And then it gets to the point of, if I actually like the product, or if I like the device, or whatever it is, then it sort of goes from there. So, yeah, that's pretty much the process.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, thank you. You know, as my brand continues to grow, I get a ton of opportunities now, YouTube and podcast especially has been huge, and I look to people like you who have done it right for inspiration on how to make wise choices as we continue to grow and reach new uncharted territory. So I appreciate that quite a bit.

Speaking of growing, part of growing a business is growing a team, and I'm curious about who, behind the scenes, is helping you do what you do. Correct me if I'm wrong, when you started out it was just you creating those videos. When did you start to find other people to help you?

Marques B.: Yeah, the channel is in year ten now, and for the first eight years it was just me.

Pat Flynn: First eight years?

Marques B.: First eight years, yeah.

Pat Flynn: No way.

Marques B.: First couple hundred, nearly 1,000 videos.

Pat Flynn: Editing everything, publishing, the whole shebang?

Marques B.: From top to bottom, yeah. And that includes the inbox, and the management, and the production, and the tax, and all that sort of stuff that comes with it. But yeah, so about—

Pat Flynn: What changed two years ago?

Marques B.: Yeah, two years ago I hired . . . So, CES is kind of an annual chaos fair for everyone in the tech world, so, it's held in a convention center in Las Vegas. And it was like a . . . it was a sort of an observation, because actually a lot of my peers in tech had started to create and grow their own teams for production, where they would have a camera man with them, and they might have an editor waiting back in the hotel room. And I thought that was really interesting.

But I really wanted to do it myself because I felt so attached to that process, from top to bottom, like I said, the editing, I had always done all of it, the writing, I've always done all of it. But the first guy I hired was sort of a production manager, where he can help with . . . he can be a cameraman. He's sort of a jack of all trades, actually, for smoothing out the process of making a video. That was two years ago, and that was just the two of us for about a year.

Then the last year was adding two people who are super skilled with specifically video production and post production. So, they're great cameramen, but they're great editors, and set design, and things like that. And they've been able to help with that tremendously.

Pat Flynn: Are they in an office with you? Are they working remotely?

Marques B.: They're with me here. So, they're not here at the moment, but yeah, so the three of them will literally . . . we'll all be in the studio, and we can all put our brains together for every single video, and usually four brains is better than one.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, nice. Well, shout out to them for all the hard work they do to help support and create videos for us. Are you in the office every day?

Marques B.: I am.

- Pat Flynn: What are your hours like?
- Marques B.: I try . . . So, before I hired anybody they were pretty much scattered. Any hour, basically. Now that I have to actually think about being a somewhat of a . . . like a people manager, like a boss, in a way, I've created this sort of artificial nine to five for the guys to come in.
- I don't think my brain ever stops. I go home and I'm still in the mode where I might be in, like, writing the next video or whatever. But we sort of . . . Yeah, we'll do weekly nine to five for the guys, and then for me it'll be seven days a week with a little extra on top.
- Pat Flynn: For somebody who's been managing a team of one for eight years yourself to then transition to hiring a team, I know, personally, that that's kind of an interesting transition. And initially I used to micro manage my team, which would kind of defeat the purpose of having a team help you. What has been the experience like, for you to now have people helping you? Has it helped, and what has it helped with? And what are the struggles?
- Marques B.: Yeah, it's been a sort of a slow process of . . . The way I described it is I felt like an octopus beforehand, where I have eight arms and I'm sort of doing everything at once. But if I could take one of my arms off and hand it to one of them, they could do much better with that specific task.
- So the first part was obviously finding and hiring people talented enough to trust them with one of my arms. And then the second part was communicating effectively the sort of intangible things that you want them to be able to do. So for editing, for example, communicating editing style, communicating color correction style, things like that are . . . That was super new to me. I had never had to describe how I edited before to anyone, because I just did it myself.
- But being able to effectively communicate what you do and how you did it so that someone else can do it was my biggest challenge for getting everybody on board. But once I found ways to do that well, I think it made things much smoother.

- Pat Flynn: In that communication, what has been the number one thing that has helped you actually achieve that?
- Marques B.: Yeah, I mean, just, as . . . literally having . . . So, just in the last two months I've had them essentially lay down the beginnings of the edit, and start to get the video probably 75 percent of the way done so that I can literally grab the project on an SSD, bring it over to my computer, and do the last 25 percent.
- Pat Flynn: Nice.
- Marques B.: But finding a way . . . So, we use Google Drive and Google Docs, and I'll write out a bunch of notes for every sort of paragraph, or note, for the video, to make it easier for them to do what I would have done anyway.
- Pat Flynn: So, in addition to managing the relationships with your team, you had mentioned your peers in tech, and it's more than just those three original guys and you now. There's loads of people in the same space as you in YouTube. How do you manage those relationships, and the collaborations, and attention for your time, and the possible additional projects you could do with them? Or are you kind of just like a "hey, I'm in my own lane, and I'm going to stick with that?" I'm just curious to know how you balance these kinds of relationships with your fellow techies?
- Marques B.: Yeah. Yeah, there's . . . I mean, there's a couple friends that I've had who have had tech channels for basically just as long as I have, so we've collaborated with each other. Most of them are actually in California at this point, so any time I find myself out there, we'll collaborate any chance we get, a new device comes out, things like that.
- So, obviously, most of my videos aren't collabs, so I'm sort of focusing on my own craft, and building what I'm building. But any time I can, I mean, it's usually a pleasure to collaborate with a lot of other tech YouTubers. We're a pretty strong community at the core.

Pat Flynn: If I'm a tech YouTuber myself and I'm just starting out, you know, the ultimate dream, obviously, would be to collaborate with you, but many of us know that's not possible, and you're so busy. What advice would you give to somebody who is in a space they're just entering, and there's a lot of other competition, and bigger YouTubers out there in that space already? How might I, as a beginner, still continue to grow and succeed in that space? And would a collaboration even be something I should even think is possible, or not?

Marques B.: Yeah, I would . . . I think yes. I think the first thing I would probably do is try to view others in that space as collab . . . not as competition, but more as like, friends in that space that are kind of doing and attempting the same thing that we all are.

And so, as far as reaching out to collaborate with someone, I actually talked about this recently, but trying to offer something where it's a win-win for everyone. So, it's obviously a win for you to be able to work with someone you look up to, but making it a win for them, where you can offer something specific in your niche, or some specific expertise you have that can make their video better, and overall putting together something that the audience could not have gotten otherwise from only one of you. So making a video, or a collaborative project of some kind, that would benefit from both of you and not just one.

And I think being able to present all that well, and quickly, is the best way of getting the attention of others who are willing to collaborate.

Pat Flynn: I think that's really smart. And you go to a lot of events, CES and many others, and I'm sure you have your own set of fans who are there because they like you, and they want to see you. And I know from my own personal experience, on a micro level of you, when I go to podcasting events, for example, it's just like nonstop, and it's . . . I can't even go down the hallway sometimes.

Are you somebody who is comfortable in that situation? Or are you more of an introvert like me, who has to work really hard to sort of be in that situation around a lot of people and fans? You know, I want to obviously inspire everybody to build fans and grow their business, but these are some of the discussions that are wise to have now, because you kind of don't even know those things can happen, and when you're there, sometimes it's too much.

So, when did you start . . . to get specific with my question, when did you start seeing fans of MKBHD, and how did you mentally sort of respond to that?

Marques B.: Yeah, I guess a couple . . . it would be a couple years ago. It's always been sort of like a weird . . . Like, obviously most of the people watching the videos are on the other side of the screen, so we've sort of developed this relationship where I don't know you very well, but you've watched a bunch of the videos and probably know me better than I know you.

So, yeah, it's always been kind of interesting, especially in the beginning, I'd say, maybe four or five years ago, when people would start to come up in the street, or in a restaurant, or something like that, and be like, "Hey, I've watched your videos, just enjoy them." I try to put myself in their shoes, where I'm just trying to acknowledge the work of someone who I appreciate, and I'm very grateful that they watch the videos, and they are supportive.

But in those bigger situations you describe, where you literally can't get out of forty people trying to get your picture or something like that, that's super new to me, so I'm not as adept at dealing with it or . . . I would describe myself as an introvert, so it's sort of not what I'm used to.

Pat Flynn: Yeah. Well, I mean, it's new territory for many people. And what's really cool is, for those of you listening, in your own little niche, you can become a celebrity, and it's really awesome. But these kinds of things you have to wonder about sometimes, especially when

you go to conferences that are specific to your industry. People will come to you, and they will want to shake your hand, they will want to take pictures with you.

And for me, I approach it as these people have, like you said, taken the time to listen to my show, and this little time that I have in this conference is . . . you know, I'm going to expend a little bit more energy for them during this time. And then, usually, I go back in my hotel room and I just crash. I'm like, I don't want to see anybody, I just want to watch Netflix and do nothing for hours, because that was a lot of things.

Marques B.: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: Two more topics I want to talk about really quick, and the first one is related to what I was talking about earlier, your Elon Musk interview. Thank you for doing that. Elon is a big hero of mine, and I know he's very hard to access. And somehow, some way, you were able to visit him and get a tour of the factory, and speak to him, and have him answer some really important questions. May I ask, how were you able to make that happen?

Marques B.: Yeah. So that was . . . So I've had some communication with Tesla in the past. Obviously I bought a car two years ago, and I guess that sort of gets you on Tesla's radar in general. So I've had communication with Tesla's PR. But I've made my own Tesla videos and things like that. So, pretty established there.

Then, basically I tweeted . . . It's kind of weird how it came . . . because I can't pinpoint exactly where Elon started replying to my comments or tweets more, but at a certain point he started to. Like, I would . . . I think I remember I asked him who was in the Starman that he sent into space in the Roadster on Instagram—of like, the 25,000 comments, he answered one comment, and it was mine. And I was like, I don't know if he knows what he's doing right now, but I see that. I see that.

So at a certain point I think I just literally tweeted at him and asked, by the . . . Oh, I . . . We were talking about the Roadster. I'm very product focused, as you can tell. We were talking about the Roadster 2020 as it's coming up, and I was like, "Look, this . . . I am pumped for this car." And he's basically promising me on Twitter that I'm going to love this car. And I'm like, "By the way, if you ever want to be in a video, let me know." And he was like, "Yeah, down."

So, after that point Tesla PR reached back out on his behalf, like, "Yeah, let's set a date and have you guys come down to the factory, and you can do a little interview-style thing." Obviously that's a very busy person, so we're not going to get like six hours or something crazy like that, but I was grateful for the opportunity, and we were willing to fly down there and make it happen.

Pat Flynn: So what did you do to, I'm just curious, prepare for that interview? What was going through your head before you actually got to see him?

Marques B.: Yeah, there was a lot, because I'm not a . . . I'm not an interviewer. So most of the talking that I do on camera is direct to camera, and it's fairly succinct and scripted, but trying to go back forth with someone I'd only done maybe three times ever. So, most of my preparation for that was coming up with interesting questions that I don't think he's been asked before.

And, obviously, this being my first interview with him, I'm hoping to get the opportunity to do more, but I'm not trying to dig these rabbit holes of super deep questions. Keep it kind of surface level for this first one, and talk through some products and things that I've tweeted about, but hopefully set up the ability to do more in the future.

Pat Flynn: That would be epic, and you did a great job, and you asked some questions that I had myself if I had the opportunity. So, thank you for that.

Marques B.: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: And then, final topic is related to just creators in general, especially the platform of YouTube. YouTube in 2018 has been a very interesting story about just how it relates to its creators, how it communicates, how YouTube itself behaves for its creators and vice versa. It's just been a really interesting time, and you have an interesting perspective with the brand that you've built, and the relationships that you have there, and the big numbers that you have and whatnot.

For 2019 and into the future, speaking to creators, what should we be looking out for? How can we prepare ourselves for, perhaps, what's to come? And I know you can't predict the future, but just in your position, I know you have some thoughts on what we, as creators, can do to ensure our long term success on platforms that are very volatile, and there's algorithms, and I'm just curious to know your thoughts to better . . . Basically what I'm asking for is just, like, can you calm my nerves as a creator from your perspective?

Marques B.: Right. Yeah, I mean, I think the most encouraging thing, when you step back and just look at YouTube as a platform, is the fact that new channels pop up and grow massively every day, every week, every month, every year. So while it can be intimidating that this platform is so huge, and there's . . . You know, the amount of channels with a million subscribers went from a single digit number to thousands in a matter of a couple years, the barrier to entry seems much higher, but it's also more accessible than ever.

And I think if you pay enough attention, and you see different channels doing different types of things, and they start to grow, and you understand why they're growing, you can take notes and hints from all sorts of places and really do something special yourself.

So, I think typically my advice, if you want to call it that, is to keep enjoying what you're doing, number one, and just keep your head up, and pay attention to all sorts of other things happening on the platform. The best of it will surface, and that's the number one thing

to pay attention to.

Pat Flynn: Thank you for that. Who's inspiring you right now on YouTube?

Marques B.: Oh, there's a lot. I've watched . . . Well, ironically I just watched the Dude Perfect video, and every time I watch a Dude Perfect video I'm like, I cannot believe that this is what they get to do. This is amazing.

Pat Flynn: Does it make you want to get ping pong balls and just mess around in the office?

Marques B.: It does. It really does. I, like . . . And I admire it just because obviously they're great on camera, but they have this whole production aspect of it, too.

Pat Flynn: Oh, it's great.

Marques B.: Every time I watch . . . I guess I'm a movie nerd, but I get distracted by the cinematography of stuff like this. So, I'm a big fan of their channel. And I do watch a lot of tech on YouTube, too, everything from my peers to smaller channels that show up in recommended, and I subscribe to those, too. So I watch a lot of tech on YouTube, whether they're making smartphone reviews, or gear videos, or any sort of stuff like that. I'm usually inspired by that.

And yeah, I'm just kind of sort of opening my eyes to new stuff. I think 2019's going to be a fun year.

Pat Flynn: Speaking of 2019, what can we look forward to coming from you this year? You're actually the first episode in 2019 on this podcast—

Marques B.: Nice.

Pat Flynn: —so thank you for setting this up. And so, what can we look forward to coming from you?

- Marques B.: I think if you look back at my 2018, and 2017 even, the percent of videos about smartphones is extremely high. It's probably 85 percent or something like that. But I have so much fun making other videos about other topics that are still tech related, but not just smartphones, so the interview with Elon, the car videos that I made for Auto Focus, the headphones stuff, the TVs, everything in between, that was, I think, something you're going to see a lot more of in 2019 and beyond, where I actually get to take some steps out of not just making videos of phones in my hand, and exploring more purchase decisions people get to make every day.
- Pat Flynn: I like that. It sounds like you are continuing that process of just wanting to shoot videos that you want to shoot.
- Marques B.: Yeah, exactly.
- Pat Flynn: Which is what got you here in the first place, so . . .
- Marques B.: Yeah.
- Pat Flynn: Dude, Marques, thank you so much for your time today, and your inspiration, and the tips and advice. Where can people go to check out more of your stuff?
- Marques B.: Yeah, you got it. I'm all about those five letters pretty much everywhere, so MKBHD on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), or just search some phone you want to buy and you'll find a video.
- Pat Flynn: All the things, MKBHD, check him out, subscribe, and thanks again, man, appreciate it.
- Marques B.: No problem.
- Pat Flynn: All right, I hope you enjoy the interview with Marques Brownlee, MKBHD. We'll have all the links and relevant information at the show notes link, which is [SmartPassiveIncome.com/session352](http://SmartPassiveIncome.com/session352). If you haven't [subscribed](#) to the podcast yet, please go ahead and do that now, I appreciate you for doing that, and there's good reason to do that.

We got a lot of great content coming your way to help you start, grow, and scale a business of your own that you can be proud of, just everything, more celebrities like Marques coming on this year, which is really cool, and people who are in it just like us, who are in the trenches of building their business, and just at the start.

Honestly, no matter what level we're at, we're always in the trenches, right? We're always fighting our own battles, we're always learning new things. And you can even see at Marques' level there's still things that he is still working on and improving on too, which just speaks highly of the fact that, you know, hey, we're all in this together, no matter what level we're at. We're all human beings.

And if you are a human being, and you want more inspiration, but you also want some strategies and tips to help you move forward in your business and in your life, all you have to do is subscribe to the show. Just subscribe to the podcast right now, that's all you have to do.

And finally, if you want to go one step further, since it's the beginning of the year, let me know that you heard this episode and if it inspired you: @PatFlynn on [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) if you want to send me a direct message or something, or @-reply me on Twitter. And you can also @-tag MKBHD and let us know that you enjoyed this episode.

I'm looking forward to hearing what you think about it. So, let me know @PatFlynn and also @MKBHD, and I appreciate you. Cheers! Here's to an amazing, successful, profitable, healthy, happy, fun year, 2019. Team Flynn for the win.

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