Creating Evergreen Funnels for a Sustainable Business – with Nick Stephenson

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Nick: Evergreen runs on all our products all the time, but we will do a live promotion or a live launch once a year. So, for the main product, 10k Readers, we do an affiliate launch once every year and there's a reason we do it once a year: It's because it's exhausting. It makes you want to just go to bed for a week.

Pat Flynn: You're listening to a conversation that I had recently with Nick Stephenson from YourFirst10kReaders.com, who's also a former guest here on the show back in Episode 162, which was back in May of 2015. When he came on for the first time, he talked about his very first product launch, which was over $130,000. The fun story about Nick was that he was actually sitting in the audience on a webinar that I produced and co-hosted, that he then bought a course related to building an online course, and that was run through David Siteman Garland.

He became a major success story and simultaneously, he emailed both myself and David thanking us about just how crazy his launch went and how unbelievable it was. And now, nearly four years later, I guess three and a half years later, he's back on the show to tell us, not just what he's been up to and what's been happening recently, but exactly how he puts it all together. He now has evergreen launches on top of live launches, on top of multiple products and multiple contents and a lot of systems going on. What's really nice is Nick really breaks down the process for us of how he's able to manage all these things that are happening all at the same time. And honestly, I remember when I had this conversation not too long ago before recording this intro, I was like, "Wow, you make it sound so simple."

The funny thing about entrepreneurship is that we often try to over-complicate things, and I think it is those who simplify processes that are successful. Nick is definitely one of those people. So, you've gotta make sure you stick around. I almost feel like this episode could be potentially broken up into two sessions because I do spend a little bit of time at the end also speaking to those of you who are interested in writing books and selling books because that is Nick's expertise. He actually helps authors get more readers.

And so, he actually breaks down a very specific strategy about how anybody starting from scratch can get their first readers for books that they publish on Amazon.

It's a very smart tactic that I had never even considered before that he reveals and just gives away today. So, you've got to make sure you stick around all the way until the end. This is an amazing show and I'm just looking forward to serving you here. So, make sure you stick around. Let's get to 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's got good days and bad days, but he's thankful for every day—Pat Flynn!*

Pat: What is up, Team Flynn? Thank you so much for joining me today. My Name is Pat Flynn here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. By the way, if you haven't joined Team Flynn yet and become a part of the community, all you have to do is hit subscribe and these podcasts head your way. Every single Wednesday we dive deep into an entrepreneur's story, or I give you a lot of tips to help you scale and grow your business and do it in a safe way that also saves you time. So, make sure you hit subscribe to the show if you haven't already. This is Session 358 with Nick Stephenson. He's gonna be revealing a ton of amazing strategies to help us organize, and this is really relevant for anybody because even if you're just starting out, you likely in the future are going to be either releasing your first product or your first book.

You're gonna wanna learn how to make it evergreen so that you can get some more time back, but do it in a way that's authentic, but also smart, and like Nick was saying earlier, potentially getting other people to help support the launch of these things, which is a very tiresome process, but we'll dive into that a little bit as well. Without further ado, here is Nick Stephenson from YourFirst10kReaders.com and also SPI Episode 162 way back in May 2015. Here he is now.

Mr. Nick Stephenson, thank you so much for being back on the SPI podcast. It's been three, almost four years since you've been last on the show. It's really, really good to see you back on.

Nick: Thank you for having me. It's been fantastic. It's been a wild few years, but yeah, it's been very cool. Thank you.

Pat: Wild in a good way or wild in a bad way?

Nick: Oh, in a good way.

Pat: In a good way. Okay. That's good. Let's actually dive into that. You know, the last time you were on the show was May 20th, 2015 in Episode 162. We're 200 episodes later now and that episode was titled A First Timer's $130,208 Product Launch. You have a business called YourFirst10kReaders.com and that was about your first launch, which, just for everybody who doesn't know or may not remember that, can you give us a quick couple minute rundown of how you got started in what you do, and also what it is that you do?

Nick: Yeah, absolutely. It was a crazy, crazy time because I'd been working the usual sort of corporate jobs for a while after finishing university. This is one of the fun things about graduating, like on the recession. It was super fun. It was so much fun. This was around the time that a lot of authors started experimenting with Kindle, which everyone is familiar with these days, but sort of back in 2010, 2011 was when it started kicking off for a lot of people. And these are authors who—they're referred to as mid-list authors, so they're not like the super mega bestsellers. They're the career authors who are putting out several books a year and going around to bookstores and signings and everything. They're trying to keep things going.

And they were experimenting with Kindle and self-publishing and finding that they were able to make much more of an impact and build a stronger career through self publishing. And that was something that I've always wanted to do. Being an author isn't really a career option at school, is it? It's not, sit down with the career counselor and map out, plan out the roads to authorship. So, you

have to experiment a little bit. I knew I always enjoyed writing but never had the way of putting it into a career. And then I started writing books, thrillers, fiction books to start with. I was enjoying the process. I was putting books out, self publishing. I was sharing my journey on an old blog that I set up and people were really engaging with it. They were following along. They were getting excited about all these things I was discovering.

And then after a few years, I was able to quit my job and write full time. Shortly after that, people were saying, how did you do this? How did you get your audience growth? How did you sustain sales? And all this kind of stuff. I think the easiest way to do it, instead of saying the same thing to everyone who emails in, is to put up some content or a course, which was what I did back in 2000, end of 2014. Launched it in 2015, and had such a staggering impact. That six figure launch was something that I never really dreamed of. So it floored me a little bit, but it just shows how eager people were for the content and to learn about it.

That's what I've been focusing on since then, is really just making that the education side, the nonfiction side, the courses into something that helps a lot of people around the world, and I've built it into a sustainable business over the last few years. So, that has been really, really cool.

Pat: That's amazing. Is it purely fiction that you're helping people with?

Nick: It's a mix. It's teaching people principles and strategies rather than, if you're a science fiction author, you have to do something different than a fantasy author versus like, a nonfiction author or a how-to kind of author. It's teaching people marketing principles, how they apply to selling books and how they might apply to audience growth and things like that. So it's targeted very much at authors, but no specific genres really, so it's kind of everybody.

Pat: Right. And I love that and being an author myself, I know I have a huge advantage having an audience and a podcast and stuff, so most authors likely are only focused on the writing part and need

that help with the marketing part which is huge, where you come in. I encourage everybody to listen to Episode 162 because Nick goes a little bit deeper into that origin story of his first product launch, he actually tells you the tools and the platforms that he used. And actually, you got inspired to create this course through a webinar that you were sitting in that I co-hosted with David Siteman Garland, because I remember—

Nick: That was it. Yes.

Pat: That was it. And we tell that story all the time. David and I team up every year to get more people to learn about how to create their courses, and we always tell that story because you sent us both an email, right around the same time about how just blown away you were. And it just makes us feel special that we had some sort of role in that, but obviously you took action and you're crushing it and I'd love to get a sense of—and this was funny, because when I started my business too, I had a six figure business rather quickly in a year and a half. I had a lot of people going, "Well, how long do you think this is going to last for you? Is this just a flash in the pan? How are you going to sustain this?"

How have you been able to sustain, since that first amazing launch, and how have you been able to sustain and continue this business and keep it growing over such a long period of time?

Nick: I think the main thing is just really, really focusing on the long term stuff. This goes back to when I was a full time author as well. Books was my only income at the time. I remember I'd come down the stairs in the morning and I'd go on my computer and I'd be checking my sales stats, would be like the first thing. It's like, this is the existential horror of the feeling that before you check your stats, that somehow it's all vanished, it's gone, it's dried up never to be seen again. It was kind of this continual feeling of dread that it was to gonna dry up at any moment. And then, I kind of decided, well, I need to build a business that doesn't feel like that: Something that you can rely on, that you can grow and is sustainable over time.

It was really, just really forcing myself to focus on that. It's a case of, for me, it was building up monthly recurring revenue was the priority. Building up a system of creating traffic and then getting them to sign up to an email list and then putting them through different funnels and different email sequences, depending on what they were interested in so that, whether we're talking about book sales or course sales, or we have the software company now as well, looking at what are people interested in, where are we sending them, and how are these sales coming through each day and each week and each month, and looking at ways of optimizing everything for the long-term.

A lot of people who launch courses, they'll put everything into their first launch. They may do well, they may not do well, but after that it's like, what do I do next? And I remember feeling this after we sat down last time, all those years ago and it was very much like, a very strange feeling when you are in a position where you've done something that not many people have done and certainly no one in your immediate family or friends group. You can't really talk to them about it, can you, easily? Sit down and go, "Hey, what do I do for my next course launch? Do you have any tips, dad?" They have no clue, and most people online, you go to forums or you ask around on social media or whatever, they're at a different stage.

They might be creating a course or getting ready for their first launch, or they may not be in that space at all. So, it was very difficult at first to try and figure out, I've done this big launch, but is that it? What do I do next? It was very unclear. So, I think a lot of the help I had from people like David Siteman Garland and resources like yours and other resources out there, where people are breaking down what does happen next is incredibly useful. So, I was really focused on making sure that any income I was getting was recurring, was repeatable, and was sustainable. That's the general focus that I had and it seems to be working well.

Pat: That's fantastic. What was step two for you after that launch? Was that launch for a recurring model, or what were those next steps for you?

Nick: The first launch had a payment plan. I think it was a three month payment plan or people could pay in full for it. And of course, then by month four, all the income's gone. It's like, okay, well, what do I do next? I knew that I wanted to move into a sort of an evergreen model as quickly as I could, which means people are seeing an opt-in or a video series or a pdf or something, and they can sign up to get more information and they can go through some free training and get some blog articles and go through a sequence of emails to get to know me, to understand what I teach and to try out some things for themselves. And then, at the right time, they move into like a sales sequence, which will then sell them the course that they're interested in over a defined period.

So, it's like having a live launch, but you're kind of running it all the time based on when people are coming in. So, we mix that up with live stuff as well that we do. So, we try to have a variety of different models going on at the same time and test and see which ones work the best. But really, that was it for us. It was like, I decided like, we've had this big launch, but then all their revenue's gonna go in a couple of months, so let's look at . . . we installed a 12 month payment plan which people really liked because then it splits the cost. And then for us, we got that reliable monthly income coming in. Then we set up all of our fun evergreen systems, which were horribly complicated back then—horribly, horribly complicated back then, and it's slightly less complicated now.

Really then, it becomes a job of . . . well, my role as the CEO of this company is to develop new products and generate traffic. So it became like, a very simple job description. So, I know a lot of people who have products online, it's like a try everything model. They'll be doing Twitter and Facebook and they'll be running ads and doing blogs and doing podcasts and doing a dozen different things, but not entirely sure if anything's working or what's working, but they know they have to do something. So, they kind of try a bit of everything and see what works. But for me, I wanted to get to that position where I knew that my role is very, very simple. We've got the system set up so my only job really is to generate traffic and

then develop new products.

So, that really helped narrow down the focus, because it can get very overwhelming if you're not careful.

Pat: It definitely can. I love how you've just kept it simple and then any sort of actions that you take are relevant to new products, new traffic, and you've just kept it simple like that, which is great. I also love the idea of recurring for you, which when I talked about recurring, often the thought is, okay, well, how can I create a monthly membership program of some kind? Which is completely different than, for example, what you offer, which is a course with a very specific outcome. Like, literally, the title of your website is Your First 10k Readers. I mean, that's very clear. You can't get any more clear than that, which is often the trouble with people who are creating solutions online.

But, to go evergreen, you just decided to . . . we're going to create these payment plans and we're going to be predictable with our income based on what sounds like the traffic that's coming in and how much people are paying every month.

Nick: Exactly. Yeah.

Pat: I love that. Your funnels, I want to talk about that really quick. Can you give us some idea of perhaps one of those funnels, one of those entry points, and walk me through what my experience might be like? And perhaps others can sign up to even experience this.

Nick: So, the homepage we've got at YourFirst10kReaders.com is promoting a video series and this is something people have seen before. They're familiar with it. Three part video series and people could sign up for it and then they're kind of delivered these videos over about a week, about a week long. So, three videos delivered over a week. In between the videos there's some blog content that goes out and asking them questions and people reply in. And then, at the end of that week, they get moved into a separate funnel which is aimed at selling the course. So, we give them preview

material, we give them testimonials, and it's more of a sales call to action rather than the purely educational stuff that we'd been sending.

There's a piece of software called Deadline Funnel, which is fantastic, that tracks people as they enter your funnel. So, it puts a little cookie on their browser and it recognizes their email address so that when you send them links to a sales page, you can close it down after a certain period of time if you want to. When people go through like, a sales sequence, if it's open ended and there's no deadline or anything like that, then people tend not to take action, as I'm sure you've seen as well.

Pat: Yes. Absolutely.

Nick: And this piece of software just means that we can say to people, you sign up for this video series, we're gonna give you a week of free videos and then we're gonna tell you about the course which will be open for the second week. And then, at the end of that it's gonna be closed.

Pat: It's actually closed for them. Like, they cannot get access to it anymore.

Nick: No. So, they're being trapped by cookies, and we know their email address and everything. And if they try to go onto the sales page after the deadline, it's closed off for them. They probably could manage it, if they really tried. I'm not gonna stop you.

Pat: Go to the library and try to get through the same process.

Nick: Yeah. If you try to do that it might work for them, but generally people can't access it and that's kinda the way we wanted it. Because we found that when you give people—and I know this from personal experience because people have emailed in and said, "Hey, you know, I missed the deadline." I'll send them a link knowing full well that they won't buy it because they didn't act before the deadline, so they're not going to act now. I send them the link

anyway and usually nothing happens.

So, we knew that we had to build some kind of deadline into it. We don't do that for all products, but for that particular course we found that having a deadline really, really works to help motivate people and get the right people in who are gonna take action and do the work. So, we found that to be very, very useful and it's all kind of tracked automatically in our email system and we've got this deadline tracking software as well. So, that was the first funnel we set up. And then, from there on, it was really adding more funnels and keeping it real, keeping the focus really on educating. So, even the sales part of it isn't really salesy, it's just more content, but then with a call to action at the bottom.

So, it's really prioritizing people learning something rather than being too salesy about it. But we're just adding more of these sequences and funnels on over the last few years to include things like webinars, article series, blog. Half of them don't have a sales sequence attached to them. It's just content that we send out to keep people motivated and give them something interesting that they can apply to their business. So, we really wanted to set up like, about six months worth of content for people when they join our list. We look at what kind of actions they're taking when we send them emails, and depending on what actions they take, we send them through different content sequences. And that's all handled automatically by our email system and that's been really, really cool.

Because then you're not caught on that content treadmill so much, of having to get a new blog post out every week or every day, or writing new emails every day because you've got that pre-written stuff that's going out to new people all the time. So that's been really, really cool.

Pat: If I'm in this funnel, I see your videos, I get pitched the course, but I don't take action. The deadline passes, I'm unable to get it—do you try to re-engage me to get it again in the future or is it basically just, tried once and sorry?

Nick: We wait. We usually wait about three or four months before mentioning it again.

Pat: Okay. How do you mention it to me? Is it automated to wait three months before going through the same cycle, or how does that work?

Nick: Well, with that particular course, if someone doesn't buy the first time round—and that's usually how they join our list is through that funnel. So, we know that they've pitched that product already. They didn't buy it. So, we send them through some content focused sequences, like send them to the blog, send them different articles, send them podcast recordings of the videos, and then we will send them to a different product altogether. And then, after that one, we send through some more content as well. And then it's a different product. And then more content, and then it might be the same product again, the 10k Readers course for the second time, but it might be in a different format.

            So, we gave you the videos last time. This time we're going to give you the webinar so you can choose to go watch the webinar, and if you choose not to go watch it then we won't pitch it to you again until much later on down the line. Maybe if we do a live launch once a year you'll hear about it then. So, it's really just avoiding overselling the same thing again and again and again, because that's not gonna end well for anybody. So, we try to mix it up and have a mix of products that we offer, and just content-focused stuff, and try to keep people engaged with a variety of different stuff that's going out to them.

Pat: Thank you for that. Now, you had mentioned your blog, and I'm here at YourFirst10kReaders.com. I don't see a way to get to your blog. Literally, it looks like a landing page for your free training with a video I can click on and you show me what the free training is all about and it's how to find your first 10,000 readers. "Exact system I used to grow my business from zero to a million in 24 months, used by thousands of my students worldwide." I can click on that, get a video, but there's no blog here. This is kind of untraditional

sort of home page, if you will. Can you talk me through why you've positioned in this way?

Nick: Well, we set up the blogs separately. That's Blog. YourFirst10kReaders.com. I've toyed with the idea of having the blog on the home page, the one you're looking at.

Pat: Yep.

Nick: But then we thought, well, the reason we're sending people here is to get them into the video series because we're sending people to this page, whether it's via ads or from a blog article or some other call to action. So, we want people to sign up. So, we didn't put the blog link on there because we wanted people to focus on the video training. But over at the blog, that's the site that gets the Google traffic. If you're typing in questions about author marketing, ours will pop up and it'll be the blog. And then, from the blog, we're sending people to that landing page or different landing pages.

So, it depends what we're doing with the traffic really. If we have control over where the traffic goes, generally, we'll send them to a landing page, but having content out in the world is all hosted on the blog, which is separate.

Pat: Got it. But it's the brand, though.

Nick: Yes, the same brand. Whether or not that's the best way of doing it, I don't know. I don't have the data on it. But it's worked well for us to keep it relatively separate. And then the main core site then is relatively easy to manage and then the blog is a separate thing that we can manage separately in a different way. It helped us from an organization standpoint. We just never really blended them together because we didn't have any compelling reason to do it at the time.

Pat: That's really great. And the final question about this process here as I'm thinking about this is, it's very clear that on YourFirst10kReaders. com I can get the free training to find your first 10,000 readers, but isn't that not the same thing as your product that you teach? How

do you delineate between what it is that you offer for free in your video training, versus how to upgrade people into the paid course?

Nick: Well, we mention it like, the first thing. So, one of the first things we say is, "I'm going to send you some free video training and then I'm going to tell you about our premium training." It's all under the heading of, "Your First 10,000 Readers." We tell people when they sign up, "Hey, in about a week, we're going to tell you about the premium course, but for now, we want to make sure that you understand the principles, and if this matches with what you're looking to do, then you might be interested in the premium side." We make it super obvious what's happening at every step of the way, try to be as transparent as we can. So there's no like, surprise. We're selling something after a week or so. We haven't had anyone get confused yet, thankfully, which is good, but we just try to make it as clear as possible what's happening.

Pat: I think you've positioned that very well. The videos are about the principles, making sure this is something they want to do, probably, and I'm assuming sharing what can happen if you were to have your first 10,000 readers and what you can do with that to get people fired up so that they would then want the training. I love that you're just being completely upfront about that and sandwiching that with really valuable content. I'm sure that then would get people excited and probably want to get that information.

Nick: Yeah. The way we've done it is we've said, in the free video training, we're gonna tell you everything. Yeah, I'm gonna tell you everything you need to do. In the premium training, the course that you pay for, we're gonna show you how to do it. So, all the detailed steps. Do this and then do that, and you're gonna see a screen share and I'll show you exactly what to do. Because I think it depends on what level people are at. They can come and watch the video and I may say something like, "You need to focus on building an email list and here's the top three ways that I think are the best ways of doing it." And I'll tell them these are the top three ways, but they might not know how to go and set that up for themselves. Or they might not

understand how it works. And that's what the premium training is for, is to show them, okay, I've given you the principles, but now I'm going to show you how to do it.

So, even if they don't buy the course, my goal was to always give them the information that they needed to make it work regardless.

Pat: That's very clear. You're probably the person who's ever said that the most clear on the show in terms of like, how to delineate that, which is just great. The last thing here: I, for example, hear about this course from a friend or whoever, and I go to this page and I go, okay, I just want the course, like I don't need the video training. I know I need to do this already. Is there a way or do you allow for people to just jump over the hoop here and get the course directly? Or are they forced to go through this?

Nick: Generally, I like them to go through the training because I've had in the past where people have come to me and said, "Hey, I've heard about this course and X, Y, and Z. I wanna just buy it. I don't wanna see the videos." Usually, I'll get them to go through the videos because I want them to be sure that it's what they're looking for, because sometimes somebody wants to jump ahead and just get it. They might be expecting some kind of magic bullets or some kind of like voodoo secrets which is gonna make them millionaires overnight or something, and that's kind of, alarm bells go off in my head. On every occasion where someone hasn't been through the video training, they don't buy it. So, I don't send the link out anymore because it's not worth doing.

But we did have someone yesterday actually, who contact me on Twitter and said, "I'm in your funnel," so he knows it's a funnel. he says, "I'm in your funnel and I'm already sold. I just want to get the course now. Can I have a link?" I was like, "I don't know. Let's go have a look." So, I looked him up in our email database and I saw that he'd been through all three videos. He'd watched them all, he clicked them, he was like the most engaged person ever and I was like, yeah, this guy obviously knows what he wants. He's been

through the material, he knows it's for him, he knows it works, he knows he wants it. I gave him the link and he bought it within a couple of hours of doing that. That's a case by case basis, really. And that's why we like people to sign up and go through the video training, is to make sure that it suits them, because we don't want to take money from people who aren't gonna get any value from it. So that's kind of why we do it that way.

Pat: I really liked that. I really liked that. Now, this is set up as an evergreen model. Do you live launch this as well or are your live launches other courses?

Nick: We do. Evergreen runs on all our products all the time, bar a couple of them. But we will do a live promotion or a live launch once a year. So for the main product, 10k Readers, we do an affiliate launch once every year and there's a reason we do it once a year: It's because it's exhausting. It makes you want to just go to bed for a week after you've finished because, not only have you got to worry about getting readers onto your list and promoting the course to potential customers, you've also got to recruit affiliates and pitch it to affiliates and get affiliates to do stuff.

So it's like doing two launches at once and you've got so many moving pieces because you can't be doing it manually. You've got to have them set up as like . . . these emails are set up to go out at certain times. So you've got to have a team of people on it. You've got to have all the software working, it has got to be set up months in advance. You've got to be recruiting people, all this stuff. It's definitely worth it from a financial standpoint, but it cripples you emotionally and we do it anyway.

Pat: This I've heard. Yes.

Nick: Yeah, exactly. We've done launches, we know it's stressful and when we do affiliate ones, it's twice a stressful. But they're worthwhile, but we only do those once a year and the rest of the time it's like an evergreen model.

Pat: Do you turn the evergreen model off when you go live? How do they work together?

Nick: We put filters in, so if somebody signs up for the evergreen product during the launch, we move them into the live launch automatically. But if they come in to the evergreen funnel, say halfway through, we leave them in, because otherwise, they'll have missed half of it and we just set up filters to make sure that they can never be in both at the same time.

Pat: Gotcha.

Nick: Because that would be so confusing.

Pat: What tools are you using to do all this?

Nick: Infusionsoft, for all the email and automation, which is incredibly powerful, but you need to have like, a team of people to run it. That allows us to have an evergreen product running alongside a live one without any crossover. So, that's been very cool and that handles all the billing and credit card stuff as well. And then, deadline funnel for the deadline tracking, really. So we don't need to use that for live launches of course, but those are the main ones and they all work together quite nicely.

Pat: I love that. Thank you, Nick. In that, I mean what an amazing plethora of information about that. I think we could potentially like, literally stop the show there and it would be massively useful for people. But, I wanna shift gears a little bit and go into the second half of the show here where I want to talk about the kinds of advice and strategies and tips that you actually offer your subscribers, about how people can find their first 10,000 readers. You obviously help authors. And many of the people in the audience right now listening are authors or soon to be authors as well, who I know are worried about the marketing aspect of their books. So, I would love for you to, if you could give us, however many principals or really important pieces of advice for that, especially for those who don't yet have like, a significantly large audience. How might they still

launch their book and still make it work?

Nick: Well, this is a fantastic opportunity for anyone I think, is if you want to get into the author side of things, now is an amazing time to be an author. It's easier than it's ever been in history to publish your words and it's wonderful. Along with that, comes the caveat of yes, it's easier, but it doesn't necessarily mean that people are gonna buy it. That's the missing point. At the time when I first set this up, we had hundreds of thousands of self-published authors all throughout the world. Attitudes have changed somewhat since then, but back then it was very much a case of a lot of people thought that if you've written a book that should be enough in itself to warrant people buying it.

And we had to work a lot on changing that mindset. Just because you have a product, any product, doesn't mean that people are just gonna buy it because it's there. You have to go out there and start finding the right people who are a good fit for it, who are gonna enjoy it and tell them about it. That was the really big focus for us at the beginning was, that prerequisite was, understand what you need to do. It all comes down to principles that apply to any business really online, which is a way to generate traffic, a way to convert that traffic into email subscribers and then a way to sell to your email subscribers effectively without being the pushy salesman type that nobody likes.

Those kind of three principles are what I pin everything on. So, in the course, we split it into three. We'll go look at traffic in this section, then the next section we'll look at email subscribers, how to convert that into email subscribers and then how to sell via email. Some of the principles we talk about on the webinars and the video training is really making use of the ebook platforms, like Amazon being the biggest one, is think of Amazon not as a bookstore but as a search engine, which is what it is. YouTube is a search engine, Google is a search engine, Amazon is a search engine, but for stuff you want to buy, which means that anyone who is on Amazon is already in that sort of buying frame of mind. Otherwise they wouldn't be there. They're not looking for cat videos.

Pat: Right.

Nick: That's an advantage for us as authors, is anyone who sees our book
              probably wants to buy it. You just have to push them over the fence,
              so to speak. I always advise people to use the platform. And one
              of the great things about Amazon is you can have books up there
              that are free, either for a limited time or permanently free, and you
              can use that as a way of generating traffic and interest because free
              books on Amazon generally get downloaded about 100 times more
              than even the cheapest paid books are bought. So, the value there
              is in the traffic. You've got 100 times as many people checking out
              your book page, downloading your book. You're not making any
              money from the download, but it's like having a guest post on like,
              the highest trafficked blog in the universe.

              It's valuable from a traffic standpoint. If you can then get that traffic
              off Amazon and onto your platform, then you have an opportunity
              to build an extremely engaged audience. So, I always tell people,
              if you want to generate easy traffic, get a free book on Amazon.
              If you're writing a series, maybe you put the first book up for free.
              If you write nonfiction, maybe you put one part of your training or
              your how-to part up for free. Maybe you do—your niche might be
              Facebook ads for plumbers and the first book might be all about the
              ads manager and then the subsequent books will be paid books,
              but the first one's free.

              Inside the book, you're offering a lead magnet or reader magnet for
              people to click-through, to get more from you in exchange for an
              email address. So, from a fiction standpoint, what I've got is I've got
              my first novel in a series of seven, it's free. And then I offer people a
              short story if they'd like to join my email list, which is set in the same
              series with the same characters. And that means that everyone
              who's joining my list has at least downloaded and probably read
              at least one of my novels, which means that I know that everyone
              on my list likes my genre, likes me, and cares enough about me
              to have downloaded two of my books to read, which is the most
              engaged person you could ask for, really.

And then you've got that set up. Because it's gonna be automated for you because your book's free, it's generating traffic, people are clicking it, downloading it. There's a link in there where they can get a free short story or if you're nonfiction, it's a cheat sheet or maybe a video training series. They're clicking through and signing up. And then all you really need to do is then promote that book on Amazon, which you can do with Amazon advertising. You can do with various promotional sites that offer author marketing. And you can just leave it as well because it tends to pick up steam under its own, kind of the Amazon algorithm picks up its popularity, and it will be recommended to people as well.

For example, one of my free books, my free novel has been, just that one book has been downloaded over a million times in the last couple of years and I don't promote it. It's just up there.

Pat: How did people even find it?

Nick: Exactly. They're searching for things similar to my book because I have configured my book with SEO in mind, behind the scenes. Specific keywords are attributed to my book. Specific things during the title, in the product description, and it's popular. It's got lots of reviews. It's had lots of downloads and I have promoted it in the past which has caused it to become more popular. And just like a popular blog post, you must have blog posts of your own, Pat, way more popular than others. Some get all the traffic, some don't get so much. It's that same principle. If you can prove to the search engine, which in this case is Amazon, that your book is worthy of recommending, then it will do well under its own steam and then you can promote it on top of that as and when you choose as well.

And that, you end up with a fantastic audience of very, very engaged people, which is kind of the foundation of what I tell people to do, is if you don't have an email list and you don't want to be spending money on advertising and Facebook ads and all this stuff yet, this is a really, really simple and free way of building a very, very engaged audience of book buyers. And that's kind of where I start off with. Tell people if you do nothing else, do that and it works

amazingly well for people.

Pat: So I would imagine that—and thank you for sharing this, I had never heard of using Amazon in this sort of fashion. But where my head is at, is if I'm a new author, I'm already working on a book right now and it's nearly complete and I'm worried about the marketing. Does this mean that I need to have another three to six months to create a second book before I can even start working on this process, or how might I use the work that I've done already to help me?

Nick: What I'm doing at the moment, is I'm writing a new series at the moment. It's the first time I've released new fiction in a couple of years so it's very exciting for me, and I'm doing this whole thing in public. So I'm writing the book, coming up with the ideas, drafting it out, plotting it out, outlining it, shooting video diaries as I go, and putting them up online for people to see so they can see how this all fits together. So I'm treating this as a new author would. First book is being written now. I have no audience for it because it's a completely different genre. I have no built-in audience. I have no built-in brand recognition. I have no standing in this niche whatsoever.

So I'm in effect a completely new author again, which is scary, but I'm all the time thinking, the book is halfway finished, but how am I going to launch it? I can't just upload it and then go to the pub, because nothing will happen. So, I'm thinking all the time, what do I need to do in advance? The first thing I want to do is think about reviews. I need to get some reviews up there on day one to make sure that the search engine, the Amazon algorithm picks me up as a popular book.

I'm going out and looking at, how can I get reviewers to review my book when it's not published yet. There are services that can do this for you and there's a few other things you can do, but what I'm gonna be doing is, once the book's finished, is having what we call an advanced reader copy or an advance review copy or an ARC. And I will be building a list around this. I'll be using thing—like a company called Booksprout is a good one, and they help you find

reviewers. I'll be running some giveaways. I'll be running some ads as well to this book that's not published yet and saying, "Hey, do you want to get this amazing book for free? Here's the premise, here's the blurb, and if you want to read this, join my review team and I'll send you the book for free."

And then on release day I'll ask you to go leave a review, and in return you'll get this book in advance and for free and people will then say yes, that sounds good. Read the book and then I'll ask them for reviews on launch day. All the while, I'm going to be building up an audience of these reviewers so that when I do launch my first book, it will have some reviews on day one, which is very important. And for my giveaway, the reader magnet, I'm gonna be writing a short story. Nothing major, something that will probably take three or four days to write, and I will have that as my reader offer inside. So, when the book goes live for the first time, the novel will go out, there will be a short story inside it, you can go sign up and get this free short story, and I'll have some reviewers lined up ready to go on day one as well.

So, that's the sort of thing you have to think about ahead of time, is how are you going to launch this when you don't have an audience, because the audience will come once that book's out there. You can grow one in advance, but it means spending money, which might be fine. I'm gonna be doing some experimenting with it and sharing my results. But really, the main thing for me is get some great reviews of this book, get as many downloads as I can, and then start working on building the audience once it's launched, and then subsequent books in the series as they launch. I'll have more people on my email list to launch them to each time, which is gonna increase the popularity of the series and increase the visibility in that search engine environment on Amazon.

It's a very, very exciting back to basics project for me. So, I'm really enjoying it. It's great fun. But that's what I would do if I was a completely new author, which is what I'm doing now and that's kind of the view that I take.

Pat: Are you sharing that process live on the blog?

Nick: Yes, we've actually set up another site. I like having lots of sites to keep me busy all the time and then WordPress updates, everything stops working.

Pat: All right.

Nick: I love Gutenberg. Anyway, yeah, that's WriteFromScratch.com. And that's basically me vlogging about the process. Right, back to basics, all the way to how do I write the book in the first place, which is where we're at at the moment. So, it's sitting down in front of my webcam and going, "Right, I have this idea for a book, I need to flesh this idea out into a premise." So, I need to introduce information about who the characters are. Who's the hero? Who's the villain? What's the main conflict of the story? What are the stakes at play? How is this going to be interesting to the reader? And then start looking at building out an outline and a scenes list, which is a very good thing for a fiction writer, is having a scenes list.

You know where the story starts. You roughly know where it's gonna end. How does all this stuff in the middle happen? You plan it all out using legal card or Post-it Notes or a piece of software. I'm talking to people through this process because we have some training we call Story Engines, which is how to structure, plot, plan and write a novel in thirty days, which is really, really cool. It's taking something that's super complicated like writing a novel and systemizing it, and saying, this has to happen in this order and this is the structure that you need to use. That really helps, because I'm sat down in front of the webcam and I'm saying, "Right, now, we've got these seven phases that we have to plan out for the story to work and here's how I'm doing it," so I'm showing them on the screen. "Here's where this scene goes, here's where that scene goes," and really taking them through it in real time from idea through to writing the book, through to then launching it and marketing it and subsequent books as well. So it's just like, the whole process mapped out in video form so people can follow along.

Pat: I like that.

Nick: I thought that'd be a really cool thing for people to see, because that question you asked about what does a new author do, it's a question that could take days and days to answer if I was talking to you about it. So, I thought, well, let's just show people. Let's just do it and record it. And then people can watch along and they can see how all this stuff I teach them can come together and combine into this full, start to finish plan that people can use. It's been really fun so far.

Pat: I love that. What a smart marketing strategy for you and all the other courses and bringing new people in. People I'm sure are sharing this with their friends so they can follow along as well. Now I'm intrigued and I want to follow along, and a lot of people in the audience may know and have heard that I am actually starting the work on my own fiction novel, which I'm really excited about. So really, really excited about that. I'm using that as a reward for completing FlynnCON and making 2019 great, starting in 2020. That's gonna be a big thing.

Nick: Yeah. It's good for the soul. Fiction writing is good for . . . This is why I'm doing it again, because I spent a few years not writing fiction, focusing on my students. I figured, if someone's paying me $600 for a course, I owe it to them to give them my full attention, but I missed writing so much and you have all these stories inside you that you want to tell. I was like, right, we're committing. We're gonna do it and we're going to record it and people are gonna watch it happen, so it's gonna have to happen. And now I've told everybody on here.

Pat: Yeah, that's so cool though. I can't wait to follow that series. We'll have all the links to Write From Scratch and all the things that we talked about in the show notes of course. A couple minor questions related to the tactic for beginner writers to build their lists and to get some exposure when they launched their first book, that early, or that ARC, the advanced reader copy: Is that simply just like, a pdf of the manuscript that you hand out to people? And is that a landing page that you collect information on? Technically, how is that all

handled?

Nick: From a technical standpoint, it wouldn't be a pdf because people like to read on their Kindle or on their phone, so it has to be formatted as an ebook, which means it has to be an EPUB file or a Mobi file. Silly file names. But basically, it's like having a mini website on your phone and it allows the text to flow within the device and feel more like a book. Whereas a pdf is just like a flat sheet of texts, doesn't really do anything. So, you have to format it as these different file types. There's tons of software that'll do it, and you can take a cleanly formatted word file, the key point being cleanly formatted.

Pat: Keep it clean, right.

Nick: Yeah, and it will convert it into an ebook for you or you can pay someone 100 bucks or something to do it for you.

Pat: How do you get it into their device, to be able to read it in the proper way?

Nick: There's a few different ways. On your website you just give them a link to download and instructions because literally all you need to do is download the file and email it to yourself and voila, it will be there. Or there's services that will do that for you as well. One is a company called BookFunnel, BookFunnel.com, and they specialize in getting readers, their ebook's delivered, so as an author, you sign up with these guys and their job is to make sure that this ebook file you've put up there gets into the hands of readers. They have various fancy technological ways of doing that and that's quite cool as well. But in a sense, essentially, it would be the same principle as a cheat sheet or transcripts or whatever. It'd be a landing page telling people what they could get, an email signup box and then an email to deliver a link to the download page. They could then download it, follow the instructions, and be away, and it's all there for them.

Pat: That's simple enough. I like that. Thank you. I want to talk to you for like ten more hours about this 'cause it's just so interesting. I love the way you set everything up and then you make it sound so simple and I think that's part of it. You just kept everything, although you're using technology and yes, that can be complicated, you've always made it seemingly simple in terms of like, what are the goals and let's just make that happen. And it's an important lesson to take away from this beyond everything else you shared.

Tell us where, before you go, we can go to, one more time, follow along in your journey and some of the more important things that the audience should be following that you have going on right now.

Nick: Sure. If you're interested in the whole process of being an author, from coming up with ideas, getting the book written, launched, published, marketing, and all that stuff, the whole kind of gamut of authorship, checkout WriteFromScratch.com. And that's kind of where you'll see the whole journey mapped out from start to finish. If you're interested in the marketing side of things, check me out at YourFirst10kReaders.com for some video training or over at Blog.YourFirst10kReaders.com for some cool articles and case studies and guest posts from authors who are killing it right now. So, there's lots of stuff to learn about.

Pat: So great. I'm so excited about going down the fiction journey in the future. From a marketer's point of view, this might sound weird, but I'm already thinking about, well, what might happen if that book turns into a movie? What kind of products and costumes can people be wearing and what would get kids excited, and all those kinds of things.

Nick: What would my action figure look like?

Pat: Oh yeah, that's good. That's good. So, we'll see what happens but Nick, thank you so much for coming on and sharing all of this wisdom and all the tactics and most of all motivating us to continue moving forward. And congrats on all the success since 2014. Keep up the great work and I hope we can check in with you again in the

future to see how your writing project, your new one, is going and I can . . . perhaps we can get our heads together related to mine as well and we can just take it from there.

Nick: Love it. Thank you very much for having me.

Pat: Thank you, Nick. Wow. Wow, just wow. A ton of amazing content. Super inspirational. Very helpful for me as well as we begin to learn how to, on my team, begin to start to create these sort of unique launch sequences for individuals who come in at different times, as opposed to these larger, more coordinated but very tiresome live launches, especially if they have affiliates onboard too. Nick, thank you so much for this. And also, the advice for those who are looking to get their first 10K readers as well, and that's exactly where you might go to find more from Nick, YourFirst10kReaders. com, and obviously, you can get the show notes with all the links and resources we mentioned today at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session358. Again, that's SmartPassiveIncome.com/session358.

Then make sure you hit subscribe to the show if you haven't already, wherever you are listening to this right now. And if you're listening on the website, there are some links for you there to help you learn where you can subscribe. I just want to thank you so much. You guys were amazing. Make sure you hit subscribe because we've got a lot of great content coming your way very shortly.

I just want to take a quick moment here to thank all of you, especially those of you who have left a quick review on iTunes or wherever you're at. I read them and I am so thankful and I just want to say I appreciate you. I do read them and I do go and see the ones from other countries too. So, if you're listening outside of the states, you are being heard.

I appreciate you so much and I look forward to serving you in the next episode. So, stick around. I look forward to serving you then. Until then, keep crushing it. Love you guys. Team Flynn for the win.

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