



An Essay to All Entrepreneurs, Business Owners, and Marketers

August 14, 2019

Pat Flynn: It is here. It is finally here. My brand new book, *Superfans*, is now available. And just for you in this episode, I want to play two chapters from this book, chapter six and chapter eleven. These are the clips from the audiobook, actually, and obviously, a part of the book and if you'd like to get the book, that's awesome. You can get it on Amazon and other places, Target, Barnes and Noble, or you can just go to yoursuperfans.com directly, right now, but either way, I just want to play these for you.

What this book is about is helping you take these people who find you for the first time and turn them into lifelong fans, superfans, lifelong returning customers. People who are going to praise about you and your brand and your message and bring new people in that'll help grow your brand. Because you know what? Too many businesses right now, too many entrepreneurs, especially starters who are just getting advice from other people. You're focusing so much on those things that are, yeah, fun to think about, right? Traffic and SEO (search engine optimization), paying for ads and getting brand new exposure, getting new people into your brand. But even if you have one person in your brand who has followed you, who has subscribed to you, who has found you, you need to figure out, well, how are you going to take these people on a journey? How are you going to create those magical moments that are going to turn them from first time visitors to lifelong fans? Let's talk about it.

Here are two chapters from my book, *Superfans*, now available at yoursuperfans.com. This is Session 384 of the Smart Passive Income Podcast. I'm the author, Pat Flynn, here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. Let's play chapter six right after the intro.

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. An now your host is kind of addicted to hot sauce, Pat Flynn.*

Pat: Chapter Six: Let Them Take A Shot. Steve Spangler is a scientist and an entertainer. In other words, he's awesome and my favorite kind of

person. I first saw him on The Ellen DeGeneres Show performing some amazing experience for our audience. My favorite was the one where he shot clouds of ring-shaped smoke out of a large plastic trashcan. You may also know him as the originator of the Mentos and Diet Coke video trend. Look it up. One day, to my surprise, I heard Steve being interviewed on one of my favorite podcasts, The Social Media Marketing Podcast, hosted by my good friend Michael Stelzner. I thought to myself, what's Steve doing on Mike's social media podcast? Little did I know this would be a game-changing interview for my business. Steve told the story about how he started his YouTube channel, Sick Science, in 2007. Before then, he'd been posting YouTube videos with cool science experiments that got lots of views but little in way of engagement.

In the podcast interview, he describes just how savvy engagement was on his videos in the beginning. "The videos that we had already had up on YouTube prior to Sick Science averaged probably between six and ten comments, and many of those were 'first' or 'cool science' or just some sort of horrible comment, right?" His audience engagement was meager and low quality. Even with a sizeable group of subscribers who watched all his videos, they weren't giving him much in terms of action beyond what they came there for.

So Steve and his team made a small tweak that made a massive difference when it came to engagement on the videos. Instead of revealing how the science worked, they added a question to the end of the video description that invited people to explain how they thought their experiment worked. Here's how Steve describes the shift: "The question at the end is what made the huge change for YouTube, and that is, 'In the comments below, tell us how you think this works.'" Buh boom, that's it. Can you guess what happened next? Engagement went through the roof. Simply by asking for the answer—the science behind the experiments he was showing—he gave more power to his audience to step up and participate. He let them shoot their shot and boy, did they shoot.

Here's another quote from Steve: "As soon as we put up Sick Science, I believe that first video that we put up had eight hundred and fifty comments, and eight hundred and fifty engaging comments where people were saying, 'The reason the egg went in the bottle is because of this,' and they would lay out how that worked. The strategy worked like gangbusters. Tons of people begin to comment on each new video with their best version of the right answer. They instigated friendly debates within the comments section. Some comments would get a bunch of likes and climbed to the top. At times, it turned into an all-out war of hypotheses."

All this engagement was a game-changer for Steve and Sick Science. Here's Steve again on what it did for him and his channel, "And it was truly that level of engagement, not the number of hits, that got YouTube's attention that ultimately led to the offer we were given to be one of the hundred funded channels." Steve is referring to the title YouTube bestowed on him as one of their one hundred original content providers, a pretty amazing honor and one Steve attributes directly to his "let them shoot their shot" engagement strategy.

Big crowds draw people in. When you see a crowd of people hovering around something, your natural instinct is to find out what's grabbing their attention. And you can use this instinct to engage your audience, create a crowd and get people to look your way and join in. People will come back to continue conversations they've started with each other. Once they're in, they're in and they're going to want to keep those conversations going, especially if they're getting notifications every time someone replies to a thread. And with social media platforms rewarding engagement, you're going to see more people discovering your content and interacting with it as a result.

The crux of the strategy is to ask your audience for an answer, even if you already know it yourself. Now, you might be worried that by asking for an answer, it may seem like you don't know the answer yourself. That's not true. You're simply allowing your audience to talk amongst each other, which you may find to be valuable, not just for reasons above, but because, guess what? Your audience likely

knows a thing or two. You and the rest of the community can learn from each other and have healthy debates about things. Your role is to foster a safe environment for this to happen. One that would be hard for people to find elsewhere. This will help people feel like they're a part of something they can relate to, not just because you're there creating the environment to allow this to happen, but because people are now able to find people who are just as passionate about the topic as they are—or more.

Just for fun, ask your audience on social media, it doesn't matter what your target audience is, this question: Which one is healthier, kale or spinach? If you wanted to grab a little bit more attention, attach an animated GIF along with it. You're going to see people scramble to give you their best answer. Many of them so specific that you'll know they spent a half-hour researching on Wikipedia. Some people, however, will give you only one-word answers and that's okay too because they'll still feel like they have a voice and that's really important to belonging. You're giving them a reason to use that voice.

A little sidebar here, let me know if this has happened to you. You're watching the game show on television. It could be any game show, Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, or whatever, and even though you're watching this game show completely by yourself, all alone, nobody can hear you, you still blurt out the answer. You still say it out loud, but it's not like you're going to win the cash prize before you say it out loud. Why do we do that? We do that because, just as I've been talking about, people love to know that they know the right answer and they will fight for it. And you can utilize that in order to increase your engagement on your blog, on your YouTube comments, in your business, and that's how you can start to get people involved. All right, back to the script.

These conversations always work best if you choose a topic that's related to your audience, but it doesn't need to be that way. Here's an example of one of my most-engaged posts on Instagram in terms of number of comments and likes in the shortest period of time. Now,

if you're listening to this audiobook, obviously you can come into the bonus course to see this image, but I'm going to describe it for you and maybe you'll be able to understand where this image comes from because you may or may not know this. However, like I said, this was one of the most engaged Instagram posts because I didn't tell people where this came from. I asked, I literally say, do you know where I am right now?

So the picture is a number of repeating tiles that are white. However, they have a red palm tree and red wavy lines on them. And if you don't know what that is, then, probably, you've never been to an In-N-Out Burger. But even though that's not in the In-N-Out Burger logo, it's very iconic in terms of the decor at those restaurants and everybody who knew that shared the answer and I had over four hundred likes and several more comments within the half-hour. It was crazy.

Another example I love is the Instagram account for the TV show, *The Walking Dead*, asking a what-would-you-do question to engage their audience. So oftentimes the show leaves people with a cliffhanger until next week's episode and they'll use their social media account to share, "Well, would you go this direction or would you go that direction? What would you do in this situation? Would you go this way or that way? Or who would you interact with" or what have you. It doesn't really matter. It changes every single week, but what does matter is it gets their audience to engage and it gets their audience to feel like they're a part of the conversation.

This strategy is beautiful because it's about letting people in and allowing them to tell parts of the brand story. It's like inviting your entire audience into your writer's room where they can share their opinions on where the story should go and connect with each other in that process of storytelling. It also works really well when you ask people to answer a question that doesn't have an obvious correct answer. When the Walking Dead's Instagram team asks the show's fans to decide how the show's story arc should go, they're not looking for a right answer. By making the question intentionally

ambiguous with no clear answer, they're going to spark people to engage and stand up for why they think one outcome is better than the other.

The next strategy takes the “let them take a shot” method a step further by allowing your fans to play a more active role in your brand and actually help influence your next steps. That's right. It's time to let them decide.

Exercise. See what it's like to give your audience a chance to take a shot. Step one, on your favorite social media account, ask a question that you already know the answer to. It can be related to your business, but it doesn't have to be. If you can support the choice with an image or a video, even better. Step two, don't take it too seriously. Experiment, have fun and see what works best for your audience.

Let's go deeper. For more inspiration and examples to help fuel your audience participation, check out chapter six of your *Superfans* bonus companion course at yoursuperfans.com/course.

Chapter Eleven: Give Them a Name. On September 8th, 1966 the first episode of *Star Trek*, the original series, aired on NBC to mixed reviews. Variety said it wouldn't work and after seeing relatively low numbers during its first season, most thought *Star Trek* was doomed to be canceled. To everyone's surprise, however, the show began to inspire its own little community of fans. Just after one season, more than 29,000 fan letters arrived in NBC's mailroom, more than any other show in NBC's lineup apart from The Monkees.

Then in late 1967 after rumors of cancellation, *Star Trek's* creator Gene Roddenberry led and funded a secret campaign to save the program. Using four thousand names on a mailing list for a science fiction convention, Roddenberry's team asked people to write a letter to NBC and find ten friends to do the same. Between December 1967 and March 1968, over 116,000 letters poured in. Several newspapers wrote columns to help support the campaign and students from

schools like Cal Tech, MIT, and Berkeley even protested the cancellation, toting signs that said, “Draft Spock” and “Vulcan Power.”

Then on March 1st, 1968 NBC decided to make a formal announcement on air that they were going to renew the show. A highly unusual move for a network to do. Likely, it was because it wanted people to stop writing in, but just as many letters arrived after the announcement thinking NBC for renewing the show. Since then, more and more versions of the show have aired totaling thirty-one seasons and over seven hundred and forty episodes.

When fans get together to support the thing they love, it can be a powerful force that can change the fate of that thing. It was the Trekkies who saved *Star Trek*. The term “Trekkie” was first used in an interview for TV Guide in 1967 by science fiction editor Arthur W. Saha after he'd begun to notice a huge growth in sci-fi interest and the cult-like fandom of many *Star Trek* viewers in particular and the name has stuck. To this day, fans of *Star Trek* identify themselves and each other as Trekkies, gathering in the tens of thousands each year at conventions and other events and they all know that when they get there, there's one thing they're going to see: someone just like them.

A name may seem like a simple thing, but it's really powerful. When you're a member of a community with a name, you have an identity as part of a group that rallies around the brand or artist and is even willing to fight for a common goal. Taylor Swift, for example, has her group of fans called “Swifties” consisting of millions of people who not only enjoy her music but also come to her aid when she needs it. Whether it's a disagreement with a record label or platform, gossip in the media, or Kanye West stealing her time on stage, Swifties are there to support their icon like their lives depend on it. The same goes with Justin Bieber and his Beliebers, Lady Gaga and her Little Monsters, Beyoncé's Beyhive and fans of New Direction, the Directioners, who were pretty heartbroken when the group broke up in 2016. You've also got the Potterheads, fans of *Harry Potter*, and the Twihards, fans of the Twilight series.

Fan communities with names are not just for TV shows, movies and music groups. Sports teams named their fans, too. Fans of the Oakland Raiders, an American football team, are known as Raider Nation. They even have a section of their stadium known as the Black Hole where their superfans—some of the most notorious fans in all of football because of their pirate-like costumes and crazy energy—congregate. Other football teams like the Seattle Seahawks and Texas A&M, among others, refer to the fans as the Twelfth Man. With eleven players on the field at a time, being known as the twelfth man allows fans to feel like they're on the field with the home team, giving the players a competitive advantage.

Now you might be thinking that naming your community isn't possible because you're not a movie, musician, sports team, or TV show. Not true. You can and very much should give your audience a name. Many YouTubers, for example, have given their fan communities clever monikers. You could try something humorous like Grace Helbig, an American comedian and YouTuber with three million subscribers who named her community the Gracists. Or something dorky like the vlogbrothers, John and Hank Green, who call their fans the Nerd Fighters, and they even have an insignia to go along with it. Or there's the straight forward approach like the one taken by PewDiePie—the most popular YouTuber of all time with more than ninety million subscribers and counting—whose band of devoted followers is named simply the Bros.

Even podcasters are playing the name game. John Lee Dumas, a longtime podcast and friend of mine who has recorded and published over two thousand interviews with other entrepreneurs on his podcast, Entrepreneurs On Fire, has dubbed his community Fire Nation. He even holds meetups at conferences and events that are for Fire Nation only, which brings his community even closer to each other and to the brand itself. One of his most used catchphrases when he's trying to fire up his community, “Are you ready to ignite?” He says it all the time. It's kind of crazy, but that's his brand and his audience loves him for it. Anyway, back to the show.

I didn't name my community until 2018. Before, my fans were simply called the SPI Community, but after learning more about how other people have fostered an identity for their own communities, I decided to give mine a purposeful name. I went for something that would be meaningful in a way that could bring us together and in this competitive space of entrepreneurship, something that would help us band together for our bigger mission of serving people. I decided to call my community Team Flynn. As I always say, we're in this together on the same team. I may be the team captain, the one with the most experience who you can trust, but sometimes I'm going to pass you the ball and give you a chance to score.

Since adopting Team Flynn into the language I use with my community, I've started getting tons of comments, especially on YouTube from people who are always thankful for being part of the team. As many of these commenters say, "Team Flynn for the win." I highly recommend giving your community a name. It's a great way to strengthen the identity of your fan base and give people something to rally around. Sometimes, people will come up with a name on their own, but there's a really good chance you'll have to be the one to establish a name and use it until it becomes second nature for everyone.

A community that has a name, has no excuse not to get together in a close-knit setting. Our next strategy is all about using the humble but oh-so-effective meetup to bring people into the same room where they can form stronger connections with you and each other.

Quick sidebar before we get into the exercise and into the next chapter for those of you listening to the audiobook, and again, I hope you're enjoying these little sidebars here, but these things come to mind as I'm recording in the studio, which is kind of fun. If you're just starting out and you think that a name alone will bring your community together, that's not going to work. But with even a small people, you can start giving them a name and have the audience and the community grow from there. But much more important than the

name obviously is what the community does together. What is the mission? What's the value? What can people expect when they're there? Everything else that we're talking about in this book will help with that, so you can't just pick this strategy alone, the naming strategy, and expect it to work for you. This has to be used in combination with many of the other strategies to allow for this community to grow and for you to foster it. All right, let's get back to it.

Exercise: come up with a name for your community. Step one: brainstorm a list of five community names. Here are some basic guidelines. The name should be somewhat catchy and memorable, capture the spirit of you and your brand, embody the community feeling that you want your audience to associate with you and with each other, be original enough to not be confused with other names.

Step two: narrow your list of names to the best one. You could even crowdsource the decision to your audience, a la the “let them decide” strategy from chapter seven.

Step three: once you've picked a name, use it, stick with it for a while and you'll begin to see people be associated with it. Hopefully, over time, your people will begin to relate to each other as a member of your named community too.

Step four: once the name is stuck, consider creating swag or other things that show off the name like t-shirts, stickers or tote bags. These things help people feel like they're a part of a community with a shared identity.

And step five: if you like, come up with a related phrase or saying to go along with the name, like my “Team Flynn for the win,” or John Lee Dumas', “Are you ready to ignite?” It could sound corny so think ahead and ask yourself if it's something you really want people saying all the time because they will.

Team Flynn, thank you so much for listening to chapter six and chapter eleven, a double chapter bonus here on Episode 384 to commemorate and welcome the brand new book, *Superfans*, which I've been working on for quite a while and I just want to thank you all for the support. This is a big week. We've already had a ton of people pre-order it and it's climbing the rankings on Amazon and we'll see. We'll see if it hits one of those lists, right? Just like Will It Fly? (Amazon link) did back in 2016. But either way, even if it doesn't, I'm so thankful for all of your support and I want you to pick up the book and I want you to read the dedication because you are in it. Yes, you the fan. Thank you so much, Team Flynn. I appreciate you so, so much. *[Full Disclaimer: As an affiliate, I receive compensation if your purchase through this link.]*

To get the book, go to yoursuperfans.com. The Kindle version will be there, the paperback version, which I would highly recommend. We spent a lot of time on the design of it. It's beautiful. It's something that you could perhaps put up next to your desk to remind you to always build for those superfan moments. I give you a couple examples here. The book is chock full of these kinds of strategies, one-off strategies that you can use to truly help you turn that first-time viewer, that first-time listener, that first-time person who comes across you into somebody who will continually come back. But not only that, there'll be repeat customers, praise your brand like it's their job, and buy everything that you come out with. This one's for you. Cheers. Thanks so much. And Team Flynn for the win. Woo!

Announcer: *Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income Podcast at www.smartpassiveincome.com.*

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