



**SPI Podcast Session #61 –
How Viral Happens
Successful Startups and the Entrepreneurial Mindset
with John Saddington**

show notes at: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session61>

Pat: This is the Smart Passive Income Podcast with Pat Flynn, session #61! [Hums the Mario theme]

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, who didn't even know what a kiwi was until high school: Pat Flynn!

Pat: Hey what's up everyone? This is Pat Flynn and welcome to session 61 of the Smart Passive Income podcast! It's actually Thursday today, the day that this particular episode is published, and it's not because I'm a day late, it's because I'm experimenting with a Thursday podcast versus my usual Wednesday Podcast launch. Because...I can. Because I can.

And that's sort of a theme that you're going to hear, partly in today's episode. The fact that, as entrepreneurs, we have the ability to do whatever we want. We can experiment, and we SHOULD be experimenting to see what will give us the best results.

So what I'm doing is I'm testing this Thursday podcast for now, and it may change in the future--and that's okay. You know, you have to change things around sometimes in order to find out what the best solutions may be, and so I'll be seeing the response as far as the number of downloads, the general feel from the audience...and it also relates to how long the written post that I typically publish on Mondays on the blog, how long that's up before something new comes along.

It sort of gives it an extra day at the top of the blog before the podcast comes down on Thursdays, so that's that. That's why this is being published on Thursday instead of yesterday or Wednesday.

In other news, [Let Go](#), my new book on the [Snippet App platform](#) has been doing VERY well. Thank you so much to all of you who have downloaded it so far. An update to the app and the book just came out which got rid of a lot of the bugs. Some people weren't



able to view the videos for whatever reason, and the recent update in the app store fixed that it seems, which is great. And the response has been amazing so far.

I had a few people emailing me saying that it was life changing for them, and that's SO cool! And a couple of people told me that they cried while reading it and shed a tear and you know...I don't want to make people cry but it's kind of cool that something I put hard work into had that kind of an emotional effect on some people. You know, people are enjoying the video interviews in the book with my dad, with my wife, April.

There's a [bloop reel](#) which just came out, too, which a lot of people are responding to. Caleb and I had a--Caleb was my videographer--he and I had such a fun time putting that together. I'll link to that, to Let Go, and all the links and everything mentioned here in today's episode in the show notes. As always, this is session 61, you can find those notes at www.smartpassiveincome.com/session61.

Thank you all again for taking the time to listen to the show, spend some time with me today. I'm really excited about today's featured guest, someone I've recently gotten to know pretty well at a recent speaking engagement. So here's the recording which starts with a brief intro and then we get right into it, so I hope you enjoy.

All right, today I'm super stoked to have on the show someone I recently met at Michael Hyatt's platform conference in Nashville this past February. He is, to say the least, a visionary entrepreneur who spoke about finding ideas by shifting our perspective a little bit and capitalizing on them. Taking things that can happen in our everyday lives and looking at them differently to find business opportunities. And his presentation was so...my mouth was open the whole time, it was awesome, and I could not stop listening.

He says "a shift in perspective radically changes the use of objects or ideas and THAT is entrepreneurship" and that quote is awesome, and why I'm totally inspired by this guy right now. He's done and is doing so many amazing things, so I want to talk to him about how he's got into what he's doing, mainly start-ups and things like that, software development, he's also advising and coaching other start-ups and businesses, so we know he knows a lot about what's going on right now.

He's got an interesting Kickstarter campaign that I want to talk about, too. He's a family man like myself so we connect on that level. I can't wait for us to pick his brains, so let's get right into it. To all the listeners right now, let's welcome [John Saddington](#). What's up, John? How are you doing today?



John: Good, man. Thanks for that introduction. It was great to meet you at Michael's conference. That was really cool.

Pat: My pleasure, dude. I was really, really happy to meet you. We have a lot in common, I think.

You know, it was funny--when I was crafting this intro, I was trying to figure out what website or business to introduce you with. Usually I say "Here's person whatever from this website" but you have so much stuff going on. I know you have a personal site at John.do, but, you know...when someone asks you "what do you do?" what do you say?

John: You know, it's very interesting. Although I've been and entrepreneur in entrepreneurship for a while, it actually took--I actually came to the conclusion last year where I was able to very comfortably say "I am an entrepreneur" and especially to be able to say it with a straight face, and especially to be able to say it in front of my wife who is my greatest fan and also my greatest critic. It really took 4-5 years for me to be able to say to answer that question and say very casually and very confidently "I am a full-time entrepreneur." So that's what I typically say.

Pat: When someone asks the obvious follow-up question "Okay, you're an entrepreneur, what do you do? What are you into?" How would you respond?

John: Typically they then ask that, and I say "Well, software development, especially high-tech consumer web." Depending on who I'm talking to, I'll sprinkle in different words that might provide some context, but ultimately it's web software.

I've been building web software as early as I can remember, and I started building software for large corporate enterprises as early as 14 or 15 years old. I don't necessarily see that changing. It really is the niche for me, and I get a lot of pleasure from it.

Pat: Why do you get pleasure from building software as opposed to all these other types of businesses that are out there?

John: I think it's because I have the opportunity one, for instant feedback, and there's just something powerful when you get to be able to create something and see a feedback loop, just even by yourself when you're sitting in front of your computer, to see something be created out of nothing.



I was really fascinated and loved erector sets and Lincoln Logs and Legos when I was younger, and I loved being able to take just a bunch of the materials, raw materials, and instantly create something that not only I enjoyed but that my friends or my family or, you know, my brothers and sisters would actually play with. And I thought "this is really cool! I can create stuff that I enjoy, but also create value for other people." And to watch other people use the stuff that I built was really, really cool.

Pat: How did you start developing business software solutions for large businesses. You were 14, 15 years old you said? You were still in school? How did you get picked up by these large companies?

John: My dad allowed me--introduced me to one of the product managers where he worked on a limb and said "this is probably really random," but introduced me to him and said "Hey, my son's really interested in computers and knows how to build software." And just let me take it from there.

I got really lucky, if I'm honest. I was building HTML websites and creating my first company around that same time, but Flash technology was on the rise. And this large corporate enterprise had never engaged with Flash technology.

They were trying to build a website and eCommerce solutions for the Japanese people. Kind of a PacRim-type area. And they knew that the 13-18 Japanese girl really enjoyed animation from all their human studies and psychology studies. (This was for Acuvue contact lenses.)

And so they said "Well, we don't know how to attract--we don't know how to create animation on the web, but we've heard of this thing called Flash." And it just so happened that I had been developing very heavily in Flash at the time. Again, very fortunate timing where I was on the cusp of that great technology and here was a large enterprise that was very interested.

They quickly created a role for me--I guess technically it was an internship, I'm not even sure if I was supposed to be employed at that age. And I started building prototypes for the international eCommerce system for Acuvue Contact Lenses.

Pat: That's pretty cool! I have some interesting stuff about Flash as well. I remember when it was first breaking out and I got my first copy of [inaudible] Flash and I started playing with it. And, you know, I actually made my first website, EVER, out of Flash.



John: Oh, yeah.

Pat: And it was a website called Surfers vs. Body boarders, because I was totally into body boarding at the time and there was always a clash in San Diego between those two communities. And so I created the site to just--I created the homepage and put some cool music and animation behind it and little graphics that increased and decreased the scale and...I never did anything with it.

But I know Flash, and that's awesome that you did a lot better things than I did with it.

John: Now, here's a question--were you on the surfer or the body board side?

Pat: Body boarders' side.

John: That's cool. I've never learned to surf, but I really have enjoyed body boarding.

Pat: Oh, sweet! Yes! Another body boarder! Every time I say that, people are like "Dude, you're so lame. You're a sponger." I was like, "Aw man."

John: I learned to body board in Jersey. I grew up in Jersey, so the New Jersey beach, which has been overrun with the Jersey Shore TV show--it was actually a legit place, but...um, anyway. [inaudible]

Pat: Cool, so awesome. Fellow body boarder!

How did you start...you said you were working on your first company. Tell us about your first company and where that took you.

John: Well, it's really cool. I started building applications and software even before then. But it was really our 14th or 15--my freshman year in high school where one of my father's friends introduced me to some of the server-side scripting stuff.

He was an entrepreneur. He had built a huge B2B2C piece of software for...I can't even remember the industry, but eventually he was acquired by Microsoft, so he exited at a very young age and was incredibly wealthy.

He came along and knew that I was interested and he helped me establish my first server, DNS and routing. I didn't know anything about that, but he said "This is what



it's going to take for you to create an online business and an online company, if this is where you want to head. I'll do all the hard stuff, registering, all the legal paperwork. You just build a great product."

I loved that. I loved having that great mentor. I'm kind of being mentored by him, but also helping him teach me the fundamentals of business.

And so I remember sitting in the...this is really random! I remember trying to, my biggest struggle was the name of the company. I was sitting in the pew at church on Sunday. I was flipping through the Bible in front of me, and I came upon Melchior and Balthazar, the Wisemen that visited Jesus. And I was like "I'm just going to tell it Melchior Design."

I started creating Melchior Design, and it was a flash job. I never got any clients, because I was just a kid, but I learned how to build applications, and I learned how to market, and even though I never technically got any real clients from it, I learned the fundamentals of business. What it takes to create one. Why you need the legal documentation. Why you need accounting. And that was really the beginning of it.

Pat: Where did you go from there? What kind of launched you into this whole start-up realm? Like I said earlier, you're doing so much stuff. When did things start to pick up and you started to get clients or you started to build things that people were actually using?

John: Yeah. Well, my story went...became very typical [inaudible]. And probably very much like many of your listeners. I went to college, I was able to really help fund myself through college by building software for companies.

And then because I knew nothing, no other option, I joined the working class. I became an engineer at some very large companies. For Johnson & Johnson, I went back to them, I worked for Dell as a senior engineer on their enterprise side. And then I became an executive at a Fortune 50 company, at Fox News Corp.

And I just became another software engineer, just rising through the ranks. And most of that's because, again, I didn't know any better. But my father, also, was a corporate man his entire life. He co-oped out of college and then worked for the same company for 37 years! And so, you know, we all model our lives, very much so, after our parents. And so I tried to really respect that.



The problem was, the corporate life was never for me. And I quickly cycled through jobs, very quickly. I was either fired from a number of jobs, or every 6 months I would move into a different role within a company, or I would try something entirely different.

And yet despite my dysfunctionality in corporate life, it was rewarded. That was the tough part. My rebellious nature and inability to fit in was actually rewarded in technology, and so I continued to gain traction, and eventually become an executive.

But the moment that I became an executive, I realized that I was no longer able to touch the stuff that I loved. It was 99% people management and 1% product. And it was almost like I was experiencing a living death, where I spent most of my time traveling, politicking within the organizations. Marketing my budget and arguing over budgetary things, and then maybe once a month, MAYBE, I was able to sit down with the team and be like "What are we building?"

And I experienced just this slow death. And so I just couldn't take it anymore. I realized that for a large corporation, an executive director, an executive role, was as far as I could possibly go. So I started thinking "Well, I want to build apps for myself. I know how to build products. I want to see if I can build some stuff for me."

So at night and on the weekends I started building small applications and fiddling with this and fiddling with that. And that's probably one encouragement I would give to your listeners, who are trying to achieve a smart passive income, a la your blog. But if you're working a 9 to 5, it's okay to start on your dreams in a very small way, by spending some time in the evenings and the weekends investing, exploring your opportunities.

So that's what I did! It wasn't a jump off the cliff and then hopefully a parachute magically appears. It was just a very starter-step approach to moving into entrepreneurship.

Pat: I think that's great advice. A lot of people think they have to totally quit before they can devote all their time because they think they need 100% of their mind, their body, their energy, their spirit into what they're doing.

And as much as that will help, it's also very risky, and I think taking a step-by-step approach, even just investing an hour in yourself every day--I think that's a tip I heard when I was first starting out. Just make sure you give yourself and your passion an hour a day and see what goes from there. That can go a really long way.



So you started devoting a little bit of time to what you were interested in, building apps for yourself. Did it eventually start--did you start to see something come as a result of all that work and what was your first app, I guess?

John: Yeah. I shared a little bit of this at the conference. I started seeing some significant traction. One of the things I shared was that there's something fascinating about entrepreneurship where it's not...people think, "Well, to be an entrepreneur you need to be incredibly, you know, you need to be a genius or discover some secret formula to an industry or marketplace or have some ingenious groundbreaking, game-changing idea."

But I haven't actually found that to be true, not just for myself but for the majority of entrepreneurs that I know. There are opportunities in the very ordinary. In the very ordinary mundane, where even the slightest change of perspective--how to brush your teeth a little bit faster, or how to do the dishes a little bit better. Things that you would gain with every single day, you just take for granted that, you know, that those are the best practices. That everything is the perfect wheel.

One of my previous mentors that helped me gain traction in entrepreneurship said "The world has one lens, and it assumes that every object and every solution was the perfect wheel." And what he was getting at was when we created the wheel, there really hasn't been a technological iteration on the wheel since it was first invented. It was the perfect solution, really out of the gate.

So people just assume "The way that I'm doing my laundry, best solution ever. There's no way that innovation could possibly occur." And entrepreneurship is looking at and saying "You know what? I don't assume that that is actually the best way. There must be a better way." And so my entire entrepreneurship background has just been looking at things a little bit differently.

One of the first applications I did and built that was a success was, I just took a look at myself. I'm an adopted South Korean twin, and I just realized when I was looking online that there weren't any social networks that were catering to adopted people groups.

So I was like "Well, I can just assume that I should go onto MySpace or--" I guess Facebook was around. Maybe I should have just used one of those. But I said "You know what, maybe I should just start a social network for adopted people groups." That



was one of my first commercial successes. I built it in a couple of weeks, launched it, and then it became big news and it was acquired.

One of my second start-ups was in 2008 where I had loved this video game called Warcraft, and was a super mega uber fan of this video game franchise, and there wasn't a social network for video game players who loved World of Warcraft. I didn't do anything crazy unique, I didn't do any groundbreaking things, I just took some of the elements of good social networking and then applied it to an interest I had, and that landed on Kotaku, it was part of the Gawker Network back in 2008. Then that was acquired by a much larger gaming franchise. So that was my second major exit.

And so all this to say is, when you look at my history of building applications, even the Kickstarter project which I guess we'll talk about at some point, I'm not doing anything crazy unique. I'm not doing anything groundbreaking. I say that because I want to encourage your listeners, and also remind myself, that innovation can be very small. You know? Innovation can happen everywhere. And I really do believe that all of your listeners have problems and have solutions, they just never really tried to look out for them or execute on them. I think everyone has an entrepreneurship bug in them.

Pat: Yeah, I definitely agree. I want to go back to your first app. you were talking about a social network for adopted people. How--okay, so you built it in two weeks. Obviously you built this yourself...

John: Mmhmm.

Pat: And then two weeks later it was acquired. How did it go from coding to all of the sudden getting--launching--how did you create buzz for it, how did you market it? And what do you feel...why do you feel like it was acquired?

John: That's a great question. Here's one of the neatest thing and also my biggest weakness is--I'm not a marketer at all. I don't have classical training in marketing, but it is a fundamental part of great business success. But there's something that happens with online products and online technology now. If you build a great product, it somehow speaks for itself.

And so, when I launched it into the netherworld of the Internet, all I did was I went to the largest adoption website that I knew of at the time, and I just sent them an email, and I just said "Hey, I created an application, a social network for adopted people. You probably have no concept of what social networking is, because you might be fairly



technologically backward"--I didn't say that, but I thought that! And, you know, "just take a look! It's free." No marketing verbiage. I was just like "here it is."

Within hours, I had seen that whoever it was, SHE signed up, and then I saw a number of other people sign up as well that had the same corporate email address. So quickly she had shared it with her colleagues within that organization.

Suddenly, there were 20 people from that organization that were part of the network. And the software worked. They were starting to chat and make connections within the application. And then it just...they must have emailed it out to everyone they knew, and next thing I knew, a couple of days later the Austin American Statesman, which is the local Austin newspaper in Austin, Texas, calls me up and says "Hey, we'd love to interview you about this social network you have." I was literally like "I have no idea who you are, I read your paper every day, but how did you hear about this?" And that's the short end of it.

What's neat is, despite my marketing dysfunction--and I'm sure a lot of your listeners are REALLY good at marketing, so they have an opportunity even beyond what I can do--but just a great product speaks for itself. Marketing helps accentuate and make people aware of a great product.

On the flip side, it's worth noting that marketing helped--if a bad product--with a bad product, marketing will make that bad product look even worse. So you always have to have a great product or marketing will just be a knife in its back.

Pat: Absolutely. Did you know that that was going to be a good product?

John: I had hoped it would be, and I had built a system that was very simple. It was a closed network where you had a basic profile and you could connect with others and have private conversation. Because that's as far as I knew, at least from a software perspective, and that's as far as I had personally wanted. I just wanted to connect with likeminded people who were adopted, who were being challenged with the same life challenges of being adopted and just saying "I want to just have a private place where I can have those conversations." That's all other people needed, as well.

Much later, we started thinking about galleries and media uploads and all that stuff. But the first MVP, the minimal viable product that the initial version was, was REALLY simple, but it satisfied a need and it worked.



Pat: How many people were on your social network when it got acquired?

John: I think we had upwards of 800. So not even that many.

Pat: Yeah. I was going to say. One of my follow up questions going to be is the whole point here of start-ups--it just seems like a...and you're basically saying "no" to this answer but--I've been noticing a trend where startups, their whole purpose is to just get TONS of people using their stuff, even if it's just for free, with the hope of exiting.

John: Yeah. You hear all this research now, and I'm sure you've read because you're very well read and part of this culture. But Facebook will be doing studies about how much each user is worth. And it's something like every user who signs up is eventually, for the life of that account, worth \$18. And I think that's, one, very tragic. But I also understand it. They are a commercial company, and they're interested in having those numbers so they can create evaluation for their stakeholders, and of course, now it's a publically traded company.

But you can't put a price tag on a person's value. Because, one, of course kind of the...the touchy-feely "everyone has value" and that is true. But one person in a social network might have incredible influence, just as much influence as another person. And the evaluation of a start-up, especially a social network, is not the amount of people but the amount of influence of the people within the social network.

For example, a great example is the adopted social network that I've created. I had senior executives in that social network. Senior executives of one of the largest adoption companies state-side. And so, even if it was just 800 people, I had the entire leadership team and the board of directors. And so, right there, the value of the actual entire network was very large. People who had incredible influence over not just their organization but also policy-making with the government.

People who had connection to lobbyists, who were lobbying on behalf on the adopted people groups, and legislation that would help make adoption easier for families who couldn't have children. So it was a big deal, and it really helped remind me that it's not about numbers, it's about the quality of the people within those networks that really does count.

That's why you'll see--and this really applies to blogging, but, in a lot of ways, that's why you'll see some blogs that have INCREDIBLE influence but only seem to have 1000 followers. And yet, you'll also see, on the same side, a blog that appears to have



100,000 followers, but can't seem to make a dime. And it's just, you know, the quality of that product, that blog, and the people following it, really does make it successful.

Pat: Yeah, absolutely.

Continuing on, because this is just so interesting to me--what made you decide to sell it? Because I think a lot of people going through something like this, they created something successful, they might feel bad about selling it or would feel too attached to it to sell it.

John: That is a great question, and I have a really great answer, because I get asked that a lot!

Pat: Good.

John: My prospective entrepreneurship is very different. And in fact, this really applies to blogging in a very strong way.

I've been in blogging since 2001. I blog every single day. And I write anywhere from 3-5000 words a day.

Pat: Wow. Where do you write?

John: I write on my personal blog. I have a couple blogs which no one knows about, because they're personal. And then I write on my business blog, my couple business product [?] blogs and then I write on WP Daily, which we write anywhere from 6 to 20 articles a day, at least at this point.

But I just love writing. It's because it helps create clarity within my thoughts, and it helps slow me down.

But to answer your question, I'm often asked "because you've blogged for so long, what's the secret?" or "How do you decide what to blog and how do you decide on what blog you should start?"

The answer is actually quite simple. I tell people you should blog about the stuff that you're really interested, but not the stuff that you're passionate about. Which really flies in the face of almost every blogger I've ever heard. I hear this all the time--you should blog what you're passionate about.



And although that's true, and it works for some people, what I've discovered is, when I blog about stuff that I really like, not love, but like, there's a distance I can create between me and the blog, which lets me make critical business decisions about the blog, because when someone offers me a six-figure evaluation for a blog that I like, I can make a very easy decision about letting it go.

But when I'm in love with my blog, or write about the stuff that I LOVE, it is emotionally impossible for me to make a critical decision. And so I've always seen my blogs as business opportunities, not as personal notebooks and endeavors to showcase who I am to the world, although that happens. I want to be able to leave behind any blog that I create so I can go entertain the next opportunity, the next project.

Because I'm a serial entrepreneur. My current projects are not my final projects. And because I've created that distance, I can make those decisions. And it's a very different philosophy, but it's what really worked for me.

Pat: That's definitely unconventional in this sort of world that I'm in. Everyone talks about blogging about your passions.

John: And I'm not saying that that's bad. It really does work. But when...when you're offered money for you, the Smart Passive Income blogging, and you are literally in love with it and married to it, there's no dollar figure that will buy you up. Which could be a great thing!

Which means you're committed to it long term, this is the last blog you'll ever create...but if you have an entrepreneurial spirit and bug within you, you're going to want to be able to leave it, and it's just so hard to leave something you're so emotionally attached to.

That doesn't mean that you're not putting your emotion into it, it doesn't mean that you're not giving it your all. I'm writing about the stuff that I do all the time, and I love it. But...

For example, I'll just let this slip here. But tentblogger.com, which is my personal blog right now...

Pat: Ted?



John: [Tent Blogger](#).

Pat: Tent Blogger.

John: Yeah. I launched that in 2011, so about 2 years ago or so, which is an iteration of a previous blog, which is an iteration of a previous blog. I'm about to rebrand that blog completely. It's going to be very much of a shock, because I've built up a very, very strong brand around Tent Blogger. So you are probably the first one to know about that, really.

Within the next couple of months, I'm going to be rebranding, and it's going to shock tens of thousands of people. They're going to be like "how could you possibly do that? You are Tent Blogger! You created this new philosophy, this new paradigm of thinking of digital tentmaking within the online space. How could you possibly leave that?"

And the answer is, as sad as it might sound, it's very easy. I'm not in LOVE with it. It was a phase, a season of my life, and I can leave it behind and I can do something better, and I can iterate and I can advance my own personal career. And if you're willing to follow me, great. If you're not, that's totally cool, too, because you can go to Pat Flynn. You know? But you can go to many other people who write daily.

And in fact, every time I rebrand myself, I lose a lot of people, and I'm okay with that. I don't mind that. It's just...

Pat: I was going to ask about that. Because, you know, for me as a blogger on Smart Passive Income, I feel that I have this really strong connection with my audience, I have almost this responsibility for them to do certain things, and if I were to rebrand or leave, I would feel bad. So how do you separate that when you're building a community?

And this question, I think, is relevant to everyone because say, for instance, all of you who are out there build a blog, and you become a personality behind it, and all of the sudden you're offered 20 million dollars for it, or whatever. How would you determine whether that's...I don't know. You could become a sell-out, or you are trading money for your audience, which is where--who helped you start up and get that blog going. That's just sort of...it's leaving me very confused right now.

John: Yeah. And it's a great question. It's one that I can't answer for you, I can't answer for anyone, but it's one that I, personally, can answer very easily.



People have followed me--and I have some very long, LONG time fans, who have followed me through every iteration that I've gone through. And they follow me--these are what we call our true fans, my TRUE fans, the ones that know my history and really understand why I do what I do.

And my intention is to share stuff that I'm doing, for good or for bad, and to document, personally, my experience into entrepreneurship, and into online software development, and in running a business. And because I'm an entrepreneur, I'm always the first one to jump into the line of fire, the first one to try something different, the first one to try--

I'll tell you one great example is...almost every six months, I try something new with my Twitter account. I will either develop some small piece of software that might wipe my entire account away, and all of the followers I have and start from scratch, or I will auto-follow everyone. And I have done this three or four times, and I will tell you, some of the most vitriolic and emotionally charged, just HATEFUL emails, have come when I have done that, when I have wiped every follower away.

Suddenly I'm inundated with hundreds of emails saying "How DARE you unfollow me?" You know. "I've been following you for six months! And I've contributed 100 page views to your blog, and now you've unfollowed me? I'll NEVER--F' you!"

And it's just, at this point I'm used to it. But the first time I was like "Oh my goodness!" I couldn't believe how personal some people are taking this...but that's what I do. As an entrepreneur, I am experimenting. I'm constantly trying new things, and if it works, I'm going to tell you about it. And if it SUCKS, I'm going to tell you about it! And then you can try it if you like. If you don't want to try, that's fine.

The people that--again, my true fans, they don't even bat an eye. They're like "That's what John does." And when I rebrand in a couple of months again, they're going to say "That's what John does." And I know I'm going to get a couple of emails, more than a handful, that say "How could you possibly rebrand and leave that legacy behind, and I became (fill in the blank) because of you!" But that's not why I started writing. Again, I started writing to document the things that I was doing and trying to create value for them for my audience as I was doing it. I'm unapologetic about it.

Pat: I think as long as you know why you do what you do and you always stick by it, then you really have nothing else to worry about. And there's always going to be people out there who are going to--there's a ton of people out there and there's no way you



can please everybody with every single move that you do, and I think that's a really important point when it comes to blogging or building an audience. You're going to have to make changes.

For example, right now I'm going through a design change, it's going to be a new design on the blog in a couple months, and the last time I did this there were hundreds of emails saying "terrible decision" or whatever. You know, you just have to keep going because you put in the effort to do the research to make sure that the design that you're doing or whatever changes that you're making is what you want to do.

John: Yeah. And it's--I cannot remember, I wish I could give credit to where credit's due, but there's a great quote about disruption, and innovation within the technology sector.

At first, innovation is seen as complete blasphemy. It's like, holy crap, what is that, what is Twitter? That is the stupidest thing! It was ridiculed.

Pat: Yeah, I thought it was dumb.

John: Right. And then, guess what? It becomes attractive. And people kind of first--trendsetters and thought leaders adopt it. Then it becomes--still taboo. It goes from the ridiculous to taboo. And then it becomes normative. And then it's no longer innovative, because everyone's doing it.

And so the people who created the ridiculousness, their job is to create more ridiculousness. It's just a crazy cycle of being ridiculed, and then being harangued, and then being acknowledged, and then admired. And then when you do it again, you go back to ridiculous and people ridicule you for it.

As an entrepreneur, you know, it's like you get used to that cycle, but honestly, I won't lie, it still hurts when I get those emails. Because I'm like, "dude! This was never about you. This was me experimenting with how I want to create value in this world, and build software. And I really am sorry you feel that way, but...I hope you've gained something in the last couple of hours." You know?

Pat: Yeah. Okay, going back to--first of all, thank you for sharing that insight. I know you're talking about rebranding, you haven't mentioned that before, so I admire you mentioning that, thank you.



Going back to your startups, do you think that this is something that everybody can do? Can anybody create a startup or does it take a certain kind of person?

John: You know what, that's a great question. The answer is yes.

The reason I do so much coaching now, and I'm in a place where I can, which I'm thankful for, is I want to lower the barrier of entry for new products, for great ideas, and help people to execute. The saddest thing--and you heard me say this on stage at Michael Hyatt's conference--the saddest thing is when people who have great ideas never execute. It's a tragedy, it really is. It's nothing short of a tragedy.

You have tens of thousands of people that follow you and read your blog, which means that there are tens of thousands of great ideas! But for whatever reason, they lack the courage, the resolve, perhaps the right push or kick off of the cliff, so to speak, to actually go do it.

Even you and everyone you probably know has probably said "Hey, I've got this great idea for an app." And the moment I hear that, my heart leaps out of my chest, because I'm like "great, what is it?" But the next thing most people say is, they begin to list out the justification or the reasons why they can't.

"Well, I don't know if it's that good of an idea" or "You know, I'm not a developer" or "I'm not a designer" or "I just thought about it last week, so it's probably not a mature idea." Almost kind of instinctually, we start getting ourselves to a place--we start convincing ourselves that it's not worth pursuing.

And my job as an educator and as a coach is to say "Nononono, let's go back to the initial drive, the initial motivation, the initial spark. Let's cultivate that. Let's not lose that." You have a great idea and certainly there's some hurdles to overcome, but they're not as large as you believe.

And so anybody that's had a great app idea, you'll be surprised to know that building some of these applications are really not that difficult.

I was walking through--I coached a gentleman this afternoon. He came in around 2:00 and I spent about an hour with him. He was interested in building an application that creates some geolocation around interests. Not a new idea, but he thought it was innovative and I wanted to encourage him.



But the first thing he said was "I'm not a developer. I've always been a project manager, I've worked with developers, designers, but I'm not a developer." So I quickly then opened a browser and I quickly went to the development documentation that Apple provides. They have development docs and even tutorials and even sample code, and I said "Your idea fits in this category. And look what Apple has already provided you! In fact, your idea..." and I kind of outlined very quickly the developer documentation. I said "70%, maybe even 80% of your code is already written for you. All it takes is for you to go do it."

And then we--I just saved some links for him, and said "Here's the core implementation for geolocation. Here's the core architecture for XYZ" and I just said "80% of your software is already built, but you just need the courage to go fill in the 20%."

His eyes just grew wide, and all it took was to share information that already existed. So I think that's really what leaders, like you in your community, that's what we're charged and responsible for doing, is opening people's eyes to the possibility. That's why I love seeing your posts about how you share all of the ins-and-outs of building your income, and that you don't hide anything.

You say "Look, I'm a normal guy and I'm going to share everything that I do and show you that it is quite possible to do what I do. There's nothing magical, there's nothing mystical, there's no secret buttons to press, just hard work and then the courage to go do it."

Pat: do you think courage can be taught? Because I know a lot of people just don't believe in themselves.

John: All educators by almost nature are idealists. I have a graduate degree in education, and so I know this academic love, well then it's just kind of built into me. You know. Teachers, we are created to help facilitate the insane. We're here to help idealize what the future for our students would be. We know, statistically speaking, that nine out of ten of our students will never go do what we hope they will do. That doesn't mean we change what we preach.

When I'm sitting in front--Monday I was in Greenville coaching a new technology accelerator and the second co-hort of this class...you have six out of 10 of these startups. This was their first startup ever, and I looked them straight in their face Monday and said "If this is your first start up, you will fail in some cataclysmic ways."



That doesn't mean that you stop or you get scared, just know it. Here's what the possibilities are. Here's what the raw potential is, and here's what I can teach you.

And I know that most of you will fail, but that's okay. Because if you're here, it won't be your last startup. Maybe it's your second or your third that will be successful. So you keep teaching the same thing. You can do it, have courage, be brave. It's not as far as you believe. And eventually some of them will move on and do it, and again, statistically speaking, many will not. But I'm always going to encourage people to try.

Pat: Yeah, I do the same thing. I think it's interesting because, you know, when we're kids and when we go to school, we are conditioned to the fact that getting below 60% is failing. That there's a clear point of failure. When you fail, you're not doing things the way you're supposed to do. So go study harder or retake the test or, you know, redo third grade, or whatever it is.

And I think that's unfortunate, because like you said, a lot of people come in, and they hear that they're going to fail, or I tell that to people too, that I coach or consult with, and I say "You know what? You're probably going to fall on your face, but you've got to keep going." And they're like "Ah, I don't want to fail!" Well, you sort of have to.

And, you know, it's not bad like you said.

John: Yeah, it's--I failed out of, I went to Georgia Tech, one of the better software engineering programs in the southeast. And I failed out of my software classes. And I don't say that facetiously because it sounds cool. I literally, actually failed. My GPA in my freshman year was 2.1. I had mostly Ds and Fs, and then a B and a C here and there.

And I had been building software for years, and--but immediately, because the institution said that I failed, I went through a dark depression. In fact, if I can be so bold and candid, I attempted suicide that first year. And I was unsuccessful, thank goodness. I had to leave school and I got therapy and a lot of counseling and some drugs to help with it. And so I survived.

But the institution told me that you suck. And even though I had years of very successful enterprise-level software experience. I didn't know how to handle that. And I really think that's sad, that we can quickly label ourselves as a failure because some person or some institution or some power says "You didn't do it our way, so you're a failure." It took me a couple years to recover from that. I'm so glad that I did. I didn't



quit, but I did leave that program altogether. And I didn't graduate as a computer science major, I graduated with some sort of crazy, cobbled-together non-engineering degree. I eventually did get a diploma, but those were really dark years.

I think that's what a lot of people will experience, especially with online and blogging is, the first year, or the first couple of months, if not the first year, they have no idea what they're doing. And they feel like "Oh, I'm not like Pat yet. I'm not like Pat yet!" And that's true, no one will ever be like Pat. But they're looking as they go. That's what you did, that's what I did, and we fell down a lot.

Pat: Well, thank you for being candid about that, John.

You're doing a lot of coaching and advising and you're working with a lot of startups. What would you say are the most common struggles right now for people and what is your advice to them?

John: The #1 struggle for entrepreneurs, especially the ones that I work with, is they have incredibly large egos. They believe that they can do most of what they need by themselves. I shared this--I may have shared this on the stage but I've said it so many times I can't remember where I've said it, but I tell all entrepreneurs, at least at some point very early on, I tell them--this is the cold, hard truth about success and entrepreneurship, the success in start-ups of [inaudible] technology, and the success of building business and building a great product. You will make more money, you will have more fun and you will have more [margin?] in your life when you partner with others.

You will make more money--and that's typically the biggest hurdle, is "Hey, if I partner with someone, then I have to give away equity in the business, and I earn less money." That's true, on the short term. But in the long run you make WAY more money.

Just think of every great product that you own. It was built by a team. It wasn't built by an individual. In a rare circumstances it may have been built by an individual, but game-changing, innovative technology like Facebook and Twitter and every Apple product that you have ever touched was built by teams.

You just need to process that for a moment, and those are successful products, incredibly billion-dollar companies now. I say if you want to survive, you know, as an entrepreneur, as a startup, you HAVE to get over ego, and you have to get over help. Sure, you will give away part of your company, you will give away some equity, and in



the short term it may sting a bit, but that's good. You will go farther, you'll make more money, you'll have more fun with it for sure, and you'll create more margin. And margin is very important for people like you and me, where we have families, because I think that's where we get a lot of our motivation.

Without margin, without that distance between you and the company and the product and the business, you can't invest in your kids, you can't invest in your spouse, and then you really lose track and lose sight of what really matters.

Pat: Speaking of family, how do you manage? I know you're a family man and you care a lot about your family. I loved the pictures you showed at the platform conference, and there's some more amazing pictures of your beautiful family at Tent Blogger. But you know, you talked a little bit about this--we have the same similarities that we are family people, but how do you stay on top of being there for your family, and also being there for your businesses, and your startups.

Different than what I do--I know what you do probably takes way more time than me at this point, especially because I'm at home and I'm blogging, and a startup with a team and software development. That just sounds crazy. How do you balance that?

John: Yeah. There is actually--balancing is kind of a logical fallacy. Because balance, in and of itself, creates tension. It's tension of two sides, if you actually look. In your mind's eye, think of a balance beam. There's incredible tension, it's right in the middle.

So tension is good. But what we've created, instead of creating balance or work/life balance, so to speak, is my wife and I have created boundaries. Very, very simple, very, very clear boundaries.

What's nice about boundaries is there's a lot of flexibility within those boundaries. And so I'll give you exactly what this looks like: Over time in our marriage and as we've learned more about each other, my wife realized that I really enjoyed waking up earlier and I got most of my work done in the very early mornings.

So we agreed, explicitly, not implicitly, and just assumed that [inaudible], we explicitly said "Well, okay, great, you're most productive point in the day is the morning. So between whenever you decide to wake up--which is, there's freedom there. John, you can wake up whenever you want--you can work solid on anything you want, wherever you want, until 7."



And at 7 is a boundary marker, because 7 is when our kids wake up, and that's when I need to bathe them, clean them up, feed them and then get them to school. Between 7 and 8, or 8:30, rather, 100% dedicated the kids, making sure that they're getting to school clean and don't look like a mess when they walk through into school.

And then at 8:30-3:00, John, that's another boundary for me. You can do whatever the heck you want. You can go to your office now in town, you can work in your office at home, you can go to Starbucks. Again, my wife said "I don't care. That's just another boundary marker. Do whatever you need to get done. But at 3:00, you're home."

I don't care if you walk in at 2:55, at 2:30, at 3:00 you're here, because that's my hardest point of the day, when I'm having to pick up my daughters from school and I have to get one of them to Tae Kwon Do, or have to get the other one to soccer practice."

And from 3:00-7:30 is family time. Just another boundary marker. We eat at 5:00 or 5:30, we do stories and play and put the kids down. At 7:30, when all the kids are down, at that boundary marker, we have a conversation. I have a conversation with my spouse, my wife. I say "Hey sweetie, I would love to get back to work on an application that I'm building," or "I lost some time in the day because of a meeting. Could you allow me to spend some time on my computer?"

And she will look me straight in the face and say "You know, that's legit" and she'll go do laundry or watch TV or watch a movie or whatever. OR, she just gives me a look and I know. She doesn't want me to go back to the computer. Then we'll watch a movie together, or we play monopoly. That might be awkward, but we play monopoly.

Pat: I've never finished a game of monopoly.

John: Oh man, monopoly's great. So we'll play Monopoly. So every day it's a conversation. But within those boundaries, I have total freedom to do whatever I need to do. So that's how we have survived our marriage. I work incredibly hard. And I know you said you don't work that much, but I know you do. You work very hard. But then you save the time for your family, and I save the time for my family. There's no guessing game.

I think that's one of the hardest things with entrepreneurs and people who are in love with their work is, if it's a guessing game to your spouse, your partner, there's a lot of tension. There's "Oh, I don't know if he's going back to watch YouTube or work." or



"Why isn't he spending time with me?" 7:30, we have a conversation--do you want to hang out? Or...you know, do you want to do work?

Pat: Yeah. I've done a couple episodes in the past about this "balance" and family time and work time, and it's pretty similar, actually. The schedule--we have a set schedule during the day, but it's flexible, and we talk. We talk a LOT about what we have going on, what we need done, if she needs some support for some of the house stuff and taking care of the kids then I'll do that if I'm able to and vice-versa. If I have something going on or a launch or writing a book or something, she understands.

I think it just comes down to communication. I love the fact that you talk about these markers during the day, that you come back together and you talk with your wife. That's really important. I think that's key. I think a lot of people out there listening will definitely benefit from what you've just said, so thank you.

John: And there's a lot of flexibility. Like, even right now, I did the entire evening from the moment I got back at 3:00, because she needed a girl's night out. So we had scheduled in advance, we share each other's calendars, so I haven't seen her for 6-7 hours, and I have no idea when she's coming back. I hope she comes back soon. But she's having a great girl's night out tonight. So there's still flexibility, you know? We can mess with the boundaries because we know--we love each other and we know that we can be flexible.

Pat: Awesome. So, John, a couple more things--I don't want to hold you too long because I know we're getting close to the hour here. I want to talk about your Kickstarter campaign. It's funny because I was just browsing Kickstarter, and I'm sort of become a Kickstarter freak and I just go on there and look for interesting stuff. And I came across [Pressgram](#). I didn't know it was your project until I started watching the videos and you started talking. I was like "Dude! I saw that guy in Nashville!" and I started to read more about the project and I got really excited about it. Can you tell us what Pressgram is, why you created it, who's it for?

John: That is so funny. When I did get your email out of the blue I was like "that's really cool, that you found it organically."

Pressgram is a simple iOS application where you can take a filtered photo, you can take an image, add a filter, and then publish it to your WordPress blog. This is very similar to Instagram, which is where I've gotten a lot of inspiration.



The story goes, back in October I realized that I wanted to leave Facebook, and I wanted to leave Instagram, because I no longer agreed with their terms of service and no longer agreed and liked this idea of this large corporate giant managing my data. Ultimately, not giving me creative control.

Interestingly enough, a few months later the big issue of Instagram came up where people realized that they could actually commercialize your pictures, and actually make money from the hard work that you were creating for them. And so I decided that I was going to do something about it, because I really enjoy filtered photos but I also wanted the control of those photos and publish them wherever I wanted.

I love WordPress. I've been working with WordPress for a while. I decided to combine the two. And so you can quickly imagine how important this is for publishers. Just think of your ability to take a photo, which many of us do every day, add the filter that you like, because filters make everything better. I suck at photography, so I'm so thankful for filters, because it makes me look awesome. And then being able to publish that directly on my WordPress blog.

I had 16, 17, maybe 2000 followers on Instagram. And I kept thinking to myself "How many page views am I missing out on? How many page views am I losing because I'm giving those to Instagram? I would much rather own those completely on my own blog."

So I have the consistency of not only page view development for my blog but also consistency of brand and messaging. So for online publishers, this is going to be incredibly powerful for them. So I started building it six months ago and on a whim someone said "Hey you should Kickstart it, see if other people want to invest in the idea."

And I did. And it's been--the response has been very, very, very positive.

Pat: It's been going really well. I've been keeping track since I came upon it. There's 272 backers, over \$40,000 now, which is awesome. So you only have \$10,000 more to go before you reach your goal and get funded.

John: Because now it's connected to WordPress, you can do some things that are very familiar to the WordPress ecosystem. For example, if you had--if you just created a hashtag within the Pressgram system that was #PatFlynn or #SmartPassiveIncome, then you could actually filter all of the photos that people hashtag into that network.



And then what's neat is because you're publishing to your blog, any comments that are done in the application are then synced up to the blog post that's related to the image. And so you have this continuity of conversation, both in the application and then on in WordPress or whatever application you're using.

And so definitely there's some neat points of innovation that I believe a lot of developers are going to catch on to, because it's using open source technology. The opportunities to do some really neat stuff that are almost limitless. So I'm very excited to get into the hands of some developers to see what they'll do with it.

Pat: Yeah. That's what I was thinking. There's probably things that I can't even think of right now that it would be used for. I'm just really excited, mostly because, you know, I've been following a lot of what you're doing now, John, and I'm inspired by you and all of your creative and amazing ideas, but also because the fact that we're going to be able to keep our images, which I think is really important, especially now, because I have kids and I want to make sure that all that stuff is my own. I don't want to be used in a way that it's not supposed to be used. That's pretty cool. And I wish you the best of luck with that.

John: oh, thank you!

Pat: I'll put a link to the Kickstarter campaign in the show notes, which you can get at smartpassiveincome.com/session61. All of the other links and stuff mentioned in that, in this session will be there.

One more thing I wanted to kind of have your leave with us here...

John: Sure, sure.

Pat: Since you're in the start-up world and--you know, I think this is for anybody. I mean, take me through--let's say, for example, I came to you with a great idea for, you know, some type of web software. I just have the idea. I'm not a developer myself...can you take me step-by-step on everything I need to do to make it successful?

John: Yes. Okay. This, again, this is kind of a very global and very quick overview, but the first thing you do when you have a great idea is you write it down. You don't keep it in your brain. You write it down, you vomit as much as you possibly can on a physical



piece of paper. I could spend a lot of time of why I think physical pieces of paper are really valuable. So don't just put it in Evernote, don't just put it on a text document on your computer. Actually write it down. There's something powerful when you apply pressure with the pen on the pieces of paper.

And then I want you to carry it around wherever you go for the next couple of weeks, or even the next month. I want you to share it with as many people as you possibly can. The people that you know, your spouse, your kids, your friends, maybe your business partners, people at Starbucks, in line at your local deli--EVERYONE.

Because this is what happens when you start sharing that idea--it starts becoming refined. And a refined idea is a much more mature idea. You'll get quickly feedback, instant, guttural feedback from people, and especially complete strangers, that say "that is a stupid idea" or "that's a great idea but have you thought about this?" And again, because you have a piece of paper, you don't have your iPhone, it's harder to type on your iPhone, you can quickly add that.

And so that's what I do with great ideas. I capture them and I start sharing it, because now the idea is refined.

Pat: What's stopping people from copying my idea?

John: Nothing. But, here's the difference between you and the next person on the street who has a great idea--if you're committed and you love the idea, you will actually see it to completion. Most people never execute on their ideas because they just never execute. The reason I'm a success as an entrepreneur, and why many other entrepreneurs are a success is simply because we do it.

We don't just talk about it, we do it. But talking about it is where it starts, and because when you start talking about it with other people, you continue to drive the motivation. You continue to build momentum, and you continue to get excited on a much better and much more refined idea.

So after an incubation period, could be a week, could be two weeks, could be a month, you have a better idea about your great idea.

The next step is finding someone to help. You may have actually done that, through sharing it with your partners, your spouse, random strangers or even online in your blog. There are some people who may share a very similar interest, and you take note



of those people. You write them down again, don't just put it in Evernote. Write it down! Say "Joe Smith had an incredible comment on my blog. In fact, it was very comprehensive! And he even expressed interest in helping me out. Write up Joe Smith."

So after that incubation period, you have a tally of a number of names of people who may be interested in joining your venture, and you email them. You say very plainly, "Are you interested in exploring this idea with me further?" And then, you know, you do what most normal people do. You begin to network, you begin to develop a relationship with them.

The question is, do they have the right skillset to help contribute to that idea? They may be a developer. They may be a designer. They may be a systems architect. They may be a business developer. I don't know. But as you find the people who have the right affinity, have the right interest, you begin qualifying your skillset. And if you're building a web app, you're going to need a developer. So you're just going to have that in the back of your mind. Is this a developer, is this a developer?

If you've found one, great. Then you have literally your team. You have you--created the idea. You have someone that can build it. Move forward, be merry, profit, have fun.

Now what happens in many cases is you find, you start building a team of interested people and no equity has been discussed, no financial relation has been discussed. People are interested in the idea.

You find that your list...maybe pared it down, that you don't have a developer, then you need to go find one. And this is just as simple. You can go to TONS of development boards, tons of developing communities, Stack Xchange. You know, if there's a specific type of application, there are TONS of WordPress developers lurking around. TONS of WordPress boards. You can go to Reddit. I mean, I just saw an advertisement on Reddit before I started talking with you, Pat. With someone who's like "I need a WordPress developer" and ten people within the first hour responded "you should check out this person," "I'm available!"

I mean, going to Reddit of all places! And then network with them. And if you're stuck, if you can't find someone, which is really doubtful at this point, go to ODesk I guess. Go to the other development boards or if you have a little bit of capital, but a job request for "looking for developer" on a job board or job site.



And then, honestly? That's as far as the advice I can give you, because at that point, you have a refined idea, you've had the courage to begin to look for partners and people to help you out, the development team. You've had the gumption to go find someone to build it, and now it's entirely up to you.

And literally, as formulaic as it might sound, that's the entire package. May fortune shine brightly on you in your new venture!

Pat: [laughs] Dude, awesome John. I think that's the perfect way to end the show. It's very inspiring. I love what you said about just ASKING people. Because I know sooo many people who come to me with ideas and they make me sign a non-disclosure agreement.

You know, maybe because I'm in a space, that's legit, but if you just keep asking people, you're going to refine your idea. As simple as that may sound, I've actually never heard that advice before. Talk about it, get other people's opinions, and get your idea the way it should be before you start developing it. I think that's great.

John: Well, I have never signed an NDA, ever. I just don't believe in them, because I say "If it's as great of an idea as it is, then you're going to go do it, and that's going to be great. I am not a threat to you, because it was your idea and you're more motivated than me."

So I'm just like...I've lost--I don't know if I would say lost, but there are tons of people who are mortally offended that I wouldn't sign their NDA, and they said "I'll never work with you again!" and I said "great! I don't want to work with you. I've got enough stuff to build." So yeah.

Pat: Ahh...that's funny. Where can people go to learn more about you and what you're up to?

John: Very simply, my personal landing page is fine, it's just john.do.

Pat: [John.do](http://john.do). I think that's a perfect "just do it" type of thing for you.

John: Yep!

Pat: All right man, thank you so much. Again, check out Pressgram on Kickstarter if you haven't already. I'm really excited, I'm going to be contributing to that myself and



John, thank you so much, very inspirational. I can't wait to talk to you again in the future.

John: Pat, thank you so much, man.

Pat: All right, man. Take care.

John: Bye.

Pat: All right, I hope you enjoyed that interview with John Saddington from john.do. Definitely an AMAZING person, an amazing thinker. It's sort of cool to see how successful people like John, people who seem to just be successful over and over and over again, in many different things. It's cool to see how their brain works and he's definitely given us some great tips from productivity to particular mindsets to actually improving your product idea and refining it. I think that was genius!

Thanks again to John, and thank you, the listener, for spending time with me today. Of course, without you this show would be nothing! It would go nowhere. But we just past 3 million downloads and, I...

Something just finished in the background, did you hear that?

And I couldn't be more ecstatic. Thank you so much! Show notes are, again, available at smartpassiveincome.com/session61. Get all the links and helpful information there, and I'll see you next week in session 62 if I don't see you between now and then in San Diego at Social Media Marketing World, which is put on by Social Media Examiner and Michael Stelzner. If you're going to be at that event, as always, look out for me--I'll be the guy with the red backpack that says "Hello, my name is Pat." Come say hi! I'd love to meet you. Cheers, thank you so much and I'm wishing you all the best. Peace!

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

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