



**SPI Podcast Session #62 -
Marketing and Monetization
With Mom Blogger, Meagan Francis**

show notes at <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session62>

Pat Flynn: This is a Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn Session #62, the more you know.

Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now, your host, his favorite childhood memory is deep-sea fishing with his dad, Pat Flynn.

Pat Flynn: Hey, hey, what's up yo! This is Pat Flynn and thank you so much for listening to the 62nd session of the Smart Passive Income podcast. I just got back – actually, just finished up with Social Media Marketing World, a conference that was held right here in San Diego, my hometown. And the weather was fantastic and so was the conference. I did speak twice actually, once in a solo session and then on a panel, both times about podcasting.

Podcasting became one of the major themes during the conference. It was mentioned as one of the hottest things to do in 2013 for content marketing and building relationships with your audience. Everyone is buzzing about the idea of podcasting. And it was just really cool to see standing room only in both of the sessions I was in. So, thank you to everyone who attended, who gave me great comments about my presentation. As all of you know, I work really hard on public speaking. And I'm going to be doing a lot more in the future. And hopefully, get better at it. So thank you again.

Now for today, I'm really excited to bring on a guest who is a part of one of the largest most powerful and influential segments of the blogosphere. Advertisers and product owners just go crazy and they look toward this group first often just because of the large amount of traffic these types of bloggers are getting, the strong relationships that they have with their audience. And as a whole, just how much they can really take an unknown product for example, and put it on the map. So what segment of the blogosphere am I talking about? Any guesses? Mom bloggers. You probably knew that since you saw the title of this episode.

But yes, it's mom bloggers, not mommy bloggers. And you'll hear more about why it's mom bloggers and not mommy bloggers later on in this interview with Meagan Francis from TheHappiestHome.com. She actually just rebranded from TheHappiestMom.com. So you'll hear us talk about her website as TheHappiestMom.com in the episode but



that – even if you go to that domain, it forwards to The Happiest Home. Again, she just rebranded.

Meagan has an amazing story about how she got into the digital world. And she's currently doing some great, amazing stuff. She just had her first six-figure year from her mom blog and everything she's doing there. And we do talk monetization strategy in the show, which is really interesting because coming from the mom blogger niche, it's much different than what I do.

She's now an author. She has a book. According to Disney's [Bubble.com](https://www.bubble.com), she is a top 100 blogger and she's doing a lot of public speaking now. And most importantly, she told me in one of her emails that she's having a blast doing exactly what she wants to do and her life and her work has never melded so well together.

So definitely, this is going to be awesome. So let's get right into it. Meagan, welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast. Thank you so much for coming on.

Meagan Francis: Hey, Pat. It's a pleasure.

Pat Flynn: Well, tell us a little bit about who you are and what it is that you do online. I know – I mean the email you sent me just was a fantastic story and I can't wait for our listeners to hear. So let's start from the beginning from you.

Meagan Francis: Absolutely. Well, I can start way back at the beginning of sort of my more entrepreneurial journey, I guess I would put it. I'm a mom of five and when I was pregnant with my third child, I was working in an office job that's just kind of a typical 8 to 5. I really loved the people that I worked with but I just didn't love what I was doing and I hated spending so much time away from my kids. And here I had this baby coming. And I had always wanted to write and I had always wanted to be a writer.

But I had absolutely no background, no formal education, nothing. I didn't know what I was doing. This is kind of back in the beginning of when people were really starting – I mean the cloud magazines that I was wanting to write for didn't even really have good websites yet. None of their email addresses were online. It was all very much still a snail mail world as we called it.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: And so, I started pitching magazines and I did learn about that through some online forums and I started – so I started pitching these magazines and started getting assignments. And so, pretty soon – like really quickly, a lot more quickly than I thought. And it's amazing how a deadline like a pregnancy will really light the fire under your butt. And I really had no social life. I didn't watch TV. I got up in the morning and I checked my email and then sent pitches all day long and not from my



job but like during my lunch break. And right when I got home and kind of got the kids settled in and I would start up again.

And so, I was really, really driven. And pretty soon, pretty quickly, I ended up actually making some real money at it and was able to eventually within the next couple of years quit the job that I had been working. And I started scaling back. So by the time my son was born, I didn't go back full-time. I went back part-time and supplemented it with writing income and then was able to completely quit within a couple of years.

So this whole time, I had been blogging as well. But my blog was always just for fun like I had a typical sort of mom blog. I wrote about what the kids were doing or what I was doing and I didn't really have any purpose for it. I absolutely saw no potential for income with it. So, it's kind of funny now. I don't why I didn't see the writing on the wall.

But around 2009, I started to get this idea like I was looking around and I felt like there was so much storytelling and sharing in some of the parenting blogging world. And a lot of it was really negative. It was just a lot of kind of, "Hey, we're all in this together. We can't wait until the kids are in bed so we can all have a glass of wine." Basically, like survival stories. And I thought that was really important but I had been a mom for a while and I felt like I was kind of moving past that and wanting to tell a different story and wanting to sort of embrace the fact that you can be a mom and not be completely insane and stressed all the time and not have any life and never take a shower. I just kind of wanted to have a different message.

So I started a new blog and that one is my current blog, The Happiest Mom. It's TheHappiestMom.com. And so, that was really – when I started the blog, I really didn't have any real intentions for it. I just thought, "I want to get this message out there and engage with the blogging world in a different way." And when I started it, it was really well-received. I got a lot of great feedback right away. And so, then that kind of turned into a book proposal which sold really quickly. And so, I wrote a book based on the blog.

And then I started realizing, oh my gosh, like when I blog, when I was writing for magazines, I was always telling somebody else's story. So I was always having to write about the topics my editor thought were valuable. And when writing a blog, I could dig in to them – of any topic I wanted to write about. And it was really fantastic. So I started really devoting more and more time to the blog. And the rest is history.

I mean I haven't written a story for a magazine unless I just really have wanted to for over a year now. I don't – and I'm making more money from blogging than I ever was from freelancing. So it's been this really interesting shift. So I'm still writing and doing what I wanted to do but I'm doing it so much more on my own terms. And it's a lot less about trading in my sort of time for money. There used to be that very clear-cut exchange like I write you 3000 words and I get x number of dollars.



And now, it's a lot – I have a lot more control. I feel over how much my income potential is and having like different – now, I've been listening to your show religiously and it's got my brain turning in all these different ways besides having a book which is a nice source of passive income. But just all these other ways that you can do that and it's really – it's an exciting time to be a blogger.

Pat Flynn: Right. Yeah, absolutely. Now, there are so many – I mean first of all, congratulations.

Meagan Francis: Thanks. I thought it was a really long way of telling my story.

Pat Flynn: No, no, that's great. I mean second of all, I mean a mom of five. I mean, I'm a father of two and we're like going crazy here. And so, to be a mom of five I mean just awesome. You are awesome. Thank you.

Going back to when you first started, so essentially, when you were saying you were pitching magazines, what you were essentially doing was freelancing.

Meagan Francis: I was freelancing, right.

Pat Flynn: And so, bring us to that because ...

Meagan Francis: Tell you about that process?

Pat Flynn: Yeah, because a lot people want to get started and with the blog, a lot of people were asking me like, "I want to make money as soon as possible. Should I start to blog?" I'm like, "If you want to make money soon, don't start to blog because that's a very long process. You should start freelancing." So tell us how you got – like how did that process work? What did pitching a magazine really entail?

Meagan Francis: Absolutely. OK. So when you pitch a magazine, you write what's called a query letter. And basically, it's like a snapshot of your idea. Now, I will say, the process has – when I started ten years ago, the process was much more formal than it is now. Like I would write on paper, I would type up a letter and it would be – there would be an introduction letter, sentence. They would sound very much like the headline of a story. So if I was going to pitch Parenting Magazine, I would try to have it be in this style of an article in Parenting Magazine. So maybe it would start with an anecdote or maybe it would start with a quote or a statistics.

And then I would kind of lay out what the story was going to be about, who I would interview for the story, and that's an important thing if you're going to be pitching magazines or websites that requires stories to be stories with experts or with stats and stuff. A lot of people who come in from the blogging end don't kind of realize that when



you're writing for a magazine or a big website, they usually don't want your voice only. They want it to kind of reflect their voice.

So they want to know like for example if it was, in those days, Parent's magazine was much more heavy on expert quotes and like authoritative sources. So if I was ever going to pitch them, I had to have stats. I had to have an ob/gyn or a pediatrician that I was interviewing in that story.

So I kind of had to lay out how that was going to work. And then I would end with this is who I am and this is why I'm qualified to write the story and you can find sample query letters online. And then I would go and then I would send it to the editors of the magazine and then I would wait and wait and wait and cross my fingers.

And over the years, the process has gotten in some ways, a lot faster and easier. In some ways, a little more complicated and a little more frustrating because now that you can reach an editor in five seconds and it's so easy to find everyone's email addresses, well, so is everyone. It used to be like there was a bigger obstacle to getting in. And now, the gatekeeper is gone. And so, these editors are getting flooded.

Pat Flynn: Yeah.

Meagan Francis: Absolutely slammed.

Pat Flynn: So since you're sort of like a veteran of doing these magazine pitches and kind of seen where it's coming from and where it is now, what's maybe one piece of advice that you'll give to people who are trying to go down that route to get started to stand out from everybody else sending stuff in?

Meagan Francis: I think now, one thing that – and I'm going to contradict what I just said a little bit in that the magazine does want their voice definitely represented but I think now that blogging has gotten so big, the trend I'm seeing is more that they also want those outside voices.

So I think you need to make your pitch stand out. There is no such thing as a new idea. There's really not. We all think that like – and I remember I would spin my wheels and think, I've got to think of like the most unique idea that no one has ever come up with before. And what I came up were like a lot of really bad ideas because it turns out, if no one has ever read about something before or written about it, maybe there's a reason.

Pat Flynn: Yeah.

Meagan Francis: It's like people – there's tried and sure themes. But you do have to find that sort of unique twist, maybe that's your story, maybe that's your expertise, and really play that up. Another thing that I've noticed now that's way different has completely changed the landscape is that a lot of these editors are now going to social



media conferences. So you can meet them in person and in a way that, you didn't really used to have that access. And then once you've met an editor, it's just so much easier to just send them an email later and say, "Hi, it was so great to meet you." and you kind of have an in.

Another piece of advice that I would give is to always follow up. These editors get so many messages and you don't want to be annoying about it and follow up every day for three weeks or something. But give it a little breathing time, maybe a week or two and then just follow up and just real politely say, "Hey, I just want to make sure you got this pitch. I'd really love to work with you. If this doesn't work for you, let me know and I'll try something else."

And don't give up. If you get a rejection, keep going and really kind of hone in on a few – I find that it makes a lot more sense when you're first getting started to really zero in on maybe six to eight people or magazines that you really want to try to break in to and really, really work hard on those rather than having like three dozen that you're pitching and then just kind of sending query letters all over the place and not really making any headway.

Pat Flynn: Great. So, you went from pitching magazines to your blog, your mommy blog and you're just talking about your family and what you were doing in daily life, for that specific blog which I – that's not The Happiest Mom, right? That one had started late.

Meagan Francis: No. That one is defunct now.

Pat Flynn: OK. But did your experience and your kind of the relationships you built and your article writing on pitching magazines, did that help you sort of get an audience to that initial blog faster than you think if you didn't have that?

Meagan Francis: I think that what helped me was the fact that I've been around – honestly, Twitter was really helpful because before then, I feel like before then we were all – there were all these people blogging and then the only real way to reach out and make connections with other bloggers was to comment on blogs. And then there was kind of – there's a limit to how many blogs you can comment on. And so, I feel like when a lot of bloggers sort of a mass got on Twitter, all of a sudden, there was a way to reach out to a lot more people all at once.

So that to me was – that was the big game to enjoy in a lot of ways. I do think that – I have been attending conferences and I've been involved in some group blogs for a few years so I did have sort of a – I had sort of a tiny little hold on that community and kind of had a little chink in there. But really, it took a while. I mean it wasn't like overnight. Suddenly, I had thousands of readers. It was more like at first, I had a couple of dozen really loyal readers who really love what I was doing. And then the word spread.



So I think what I had been doing before – but I will say, the magazine work, I don't think that made any difference because I don't – when people read magazine articles, most of the time, I mean think about it. When you pick up a magazine, most of the time, unless it's like a really personal story, you probably not going to look at who wrote the story.

Pat Flynn: I don't.

Meagan Francis: And then even if you do, you're not going to look that person up. So, I don't think that made much difference. Surprisingly, I really thought it would. Like when I wrote my book proposal, I was like, "I have this great platform. I've been published in dozens and dozens of national magazines." And editors were kind of like, "Well, that doesn't really matter because no one remembers you."

Pat Flynn: That's true.

Meagan Francis: It doesn't mean anything.

Pat Flynn: I think about that and I don't really think about who wrote those articles to be honest.

Meagan Francis: No. You just – that's not the natural – I do as a writer but readers – because I'm always curious who's writing them but the typical reader doesn't care.

Pat Flynn: Yeah.

Meagan Francis: They just think of it as an extension of the magazine.

Pat Flynn: Yeah. I mean maybe they should add calls to action at the end of every article to get ...

Meagan Francis: Hey, that would be one good thing that they could implement.

Pat Flynn: OK. So, then you started The Happiest Mom. This was in 2009 you said, which I think is a great sort of twist on what I was also seeing in the concept of mommy bloggers here at the time because everything was so negative and I'm just really happy that you did that. But you said initially that it was well-received right away. How did you get so many people to come on to the site and how was it so well-received so quickly?

Meagan Francis: Well, it wasn't that like I suddenly had tons of readers because that's not really how it worked. It was more like I had made a few connections with highly influential people who enjoyed what I was saying and spread the word. So – but that still took some time. It wasn't overnight. Definitely not.



In fact, interestingly, it wasn't really until my book came out that I suddenly saw a spike in traffic. And I think some of that was because that gave me a little bit of that cache, that clout of having a book come out. And this was a little bit before like every other blogger had a book coming out. So, I was a little more kind of on a cutting edge there and I think people were like, "Oh, she's got a book. That's impressive. Let's pay attention."

Pat Flynn: This is a traditional ...

Meagan Francis: This was the traditionally published book. Actually, it was published in conjunction with Parenting Magazine. So I had that kind of – I had that sort of muscle behind the book and then it kind of did give me a little bit of a higher profile I think. But it still took a couple of years to really get to the point where my blog could be seen as like a money-making thing all on its own.

Pat Flynn: Right. So ...

Meagan Francis: Up until the – it was more like a platform for me or one way, one outlet. It was a way for me to get jobs but it wasn't like a job in and of itself.

Pat Flynn: Right. But I mean now, you emailed me and said that in 2012, you made 40% more than your best year of freelancing.

Meagan Francis: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: And this was your first six-figure year from your blog. How was that happening? I mean it is all just the book? How was that happening?

Meagan Francis: No. The book came out a couple of years ago. And honestly, those sales are still there but they've tapered off a bit. It's crazy. OK. So, one of the things – so let me be really clear. When I say like a six-figure year, I count everything that I do together. So some of that is consulting, some of that is blogging that I do for other sites. For example, I write for Bubble.com, which is a big parenting site. I write for Asia TV gardening site. So I have like different blogging gigs that I do. But they're different from magazine work in that again, I'm not pitching those stories because they're all somehow related to my life or stuff that I know about. And it's not the same process as like just freelancing was where I would write a query, wait, blah, blah, blah.

But the other thing that I've been doing a lot more is working with brands. And that's something that – it's huge right now with the mom blogging world or the parenting blogging world and I think it's going to start infiltrating into other kinds of blogging as well. So, let me just give you an example. I work with Goldfish Crackers. And so, one of the things that I do is I write content for their site and then I excerpt my posts from my own sites. So I'm kind of acting kind of like as a spokesperson sort of for this brand. So



I'm coming up with custom content. I'm working with ConAgra Foods right now and I'm doing video for them.

So for example, like I might be promoting a campaign that they've got going on. So I might do a video that shows me – I just did one that showed me blanching and freezing vegetables kind of in conjunction with the campaign they're doing about frozen foods. So, what's great about it is it's not like I'm filming commercials. It's more kind of like the sponsored – like when you're watching – do you even watch the Food Network?

Pat Flynn: I do, all the time. Yeah, *Iron Chef* and *Chopped* are my favorite shows.

Meagan Francis: Yeah. OK. I love *Chopped*. So you know how you're watching sometime and like somebody from one of the shows will come on and she is showing you how to make a French fries and then you've kind of figured out it's a commercial for Viva paper towels but they're not really saying like this is a commercial.

Pat Flynn: Yeah.

Meagan Francis: So it's kind of like that.

Pat Flynn: So there's still some added value to the audience.

Meagan Francis: There's added value. I'm showing, I'm teaching, I'm demonstrating. I'm not just like – I'm not just advertising. And the trick with being a blogger is that all has to fit into your life in a really authentic way. And my readers know me so well and they know my positions on things so well that I have to be selective about who I promote. If I just suddenly started shilling every company, people would get turned off and they would leave.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: So it's that delicate balance. But it's really lucrative work and I find it very satisfying. It's really fun and creative in a totally different way. And I still feel like I'm giving a service to my readers without having to like sell them in every post. Like always be selling something.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, I think that's always the most important thing to think about is, is this going to be useful, is this something interesting or exciting or entertaining for your audience.

Meagan Francis: Right.

Pat Flynn: I'm glad that you still have that, that's sort of the backbone behind everything you do. But OK, so these brands, do they come to you? Do you go to them? How does that relationship start?



Meagan Francis: Well, sometimes – OK. So if it was me and I was just starting out, it would be sort of probably me more going to them. I was lucky enough that there's a blogging agency that just opened up last year called Sway. And so, my – I actually have an agent named Danielle Wiley and she used to work at LM, which is a big marketing and PR company. So she already had a lot of these connections. So sometimes, she'll come to with a campaign and say, "Hey, x brand wants you to do four videos and five posts and blah, blah, blah." And then I say, "OK, that sounds great." or, "No, thanks. It's not my thing." And she negotiates all for me.

Sometime brands come to me directly via my website. Sometimes I met them at conferences. I go to a lot of conferences and those are really a great way to just kind of meet people and network. It doesn't have to be a hard sale, just to kind of find out who's out there. The world is so small. People move around a lot. So somebody who's at a certain agency might move to a different agency or someone who's working with one brand might reach out to me and say, "Hey, would you want to write us a review of XZ product?" And I don't really do reviews.

I've never been a blogger who will be like, "Yeah, please send me this product. I will write a review about it." If I'm going to write a review about something, it's because I just love it. It's awesome. I used it. It blew me away. Because I just – if it's not an interest of mine and I don't have a lot of time to sort of fielding these products. But I might say, "That's not a great fit for me but please do keep me in mind if you have things in the future."

Pat Flynn: Yeah.

Meagan Francis: And so, it's kind of a mix I guess at this point. It's still sort of the Wild West in a lot of ways. But now, my agency, Sway, is now pairing up with another network called the [SITS Girls](http://thesitsgirls.com) and I think it's thesitsgirls.com and I can send you that link so you can put it in the show notes. But they're putting together I think like 40,000 bloggers or something that they're going to be bringing into these campaigns.

So there is opportunity there even for bloggers who may have smaller audiences or who are just getting started. There is a way to kind of stepping stone up.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: I just think the challenge is not doing so much of it when you're building your audience because you have to build the audience first.

Pat Flynn: Right, definitely. We will talk about that in a second because I want to know sort of your strategies for doing that. But let's talk about these agencies really quick. Are these agencies just for sort of mommy blogging community? How do you get hooked up with one?



Meagan Francis: I think that that's changing. It's funny. And I've been talking about this a lot with my blogging friends who are moms. And so many of them started off – so many of us started off writing about parenting. Maybe we're in the thick of things. We have little kids. We're writing about our day to day experiences.

And then at some point, you're kind of burn out on that. Either your kids get older and you don't want to write about them anymore or they don't want you to write about them anymore or sometimes, you just kind of get tired telling those stories. It's like, OK, what else do I have to say?

And a lot of what I'm seeing now is bloggers delving into different niches. So you might have someone who yeah, she was like "mommy blogger" which that phrase by the way is highly controversial.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, I want to talk about that too.

Meagan Francis: Yeah. But it's – but maybe they get into food or maybe they get into decorating or maybe they get into DIY projects or maybe they become writing coaches or – so there's like all – what I'm seeing now is all this sort of first generation mom bloggers who are now suddenly getting all these other niches and they're delving in. And it's great because now, it just opens up – it opens you up to so many other possibilities and it kind of – it felt like mommy blogging was such a saturated niche for a while like we're all writing the same stuff.

And now, everyone I can see kind of like trickling out into these new areas. And it's really cool and I do think some of these agencies highly focused on mom bloggers, not exclusively but highly. But I think that that's going to change. I think food and decorating and home design and all that stuff is going to become just as big. If it's not already there, it's getting there.

Pat Flynn: Right. So let's talk about mommy blogging because that was something that when I was starting to blog about, I heard a ton about and this sort of force, that is the mommy blogging community. It's still like kind of weird – not weird to me but just sort of unknown as far as – how did this come to be? What is the power behind this mommy blogging? Why mommy bloggers? And sort of you were mentioning some sort of negative connotations that came along with that.

Meagan Francis: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: What are those?

Meagan Francis: Sure. Well, I think what it was and for me, when I first started, I started having kids like forever ago. It was in the '90s so my first son was born in 1997. I those days, there were forums in ICQ Chat so people didn't use blogs really.



Pat Flynn: ICQ, yes.

Meagan Francis: Yeah, I know. But you would go into AOL's parenting chat or Ivillages parenting boards or whatever and that was your community. And a lot of us feel so isolated. Maybe we're working moms and we don't have other good working mom friends in our offices or maybe we're at home moms and we know absolutely nobody else around us who, parents the same way we do or even has kids or is home during the day or whatever.

So there was a lot of loneliness and I think that the Internet change so many things. Just suddenly, I remember the first time I got online. I mean I got online in college and it was like on my old email that was just a black screen with the blue letters. But I mean the first time I really got the Internet and I just sat there like – and I had a geocities website and I had like [inaudible] in it and like the URL was super long.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, yeah.

Meagan Francis: And I remember this being like, "Oh my gosh, I can do anything I want. It was such an amazing moment. And I'll never forget. I had a baby on my knee who was like three months old and I just thought, "I can talk to anyone I want. I can do anything I want." Like there are no limits. And that was – that's never gone away from me, that amazement with this medium.

So for me, in the early days of parenting, it was really about the forums. But then around 2000 and I'll never forget it, someone sent me a link to her blog. And I was like, what is this? This is dumb. What is this blog? But it was so – and there were like 30 of us in the blogroll and we all just copied each other's blogrolls because there were only 30 of us blogging and we would just all go round this loop.

But it was such a cool moment because with the forums, it can start to kind of feel like hijacking if you told your story too much and you didn't always – it wasn't like your place. And then in your blog, it was your place and you could say whatever you wanted. And people started building these communities just around these blogs. And then that got bigger and bigger. I think I set up my first Blogspot blog in like 2001. It was really corny and cringed-worthy. And I hope it's not cached out there somewhere.

But by 2006, suddenly, it was like kind of like this critical mass was starting to form and now, there were hundreds. And then the first BlogHer conference was I think in – I want to say 2005 or 2006. That suddenly brought all these women out of the woodwork and then suddenly, I mean it happens so fast. When you think about really how quickly the rise of the mommy blogging world happened, it's amazing.

But by the time I got into it in 2009, I really was like, "Man, has this peaked already? Am I too late?" I don't think it did. But ...



Pat Flynn: It didn't peak for you.

Meagan Francis: It didn't peak for me and I don't think – I think it's just changing. I don't think it's peaked. And I think blogging still even with Facebook and Twitter and all that, I think blogging still has a very important role.

So you were asking about the negative connotation of the word mommy blogger. You know, it's funny. I don't think a mom blogger coined the phrase mommy bloggers. Someone like decided to kind of slap it on us.

Pat Flynn: Generalized that sort of.

Meagan Francis: Yeah. Well, I think it was just convenient for marketers maybe or the media. They're like, "What are we going to call all these women who blog about their kids? I know. Let's call them mommy bloggers." And so, it kind of stuck. And a lot of us cringed about that because even my kids don't call me mommy. I mean it's just ...

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: It would be like calling me a mommy lawyer like I was a lawyer who happened to be a mom. And not all mom bloggers write about their kids. I mean a lot of us don't. I write about motherhood but I don't write about it always through the lens of like what cute things my kids did today. It's more like how can I take this thing that happened to me and make it into a valuable story that's going to help my readers.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: So, it's a fine line but it's like we don't all do it the same way. And so, I'm hoping that we're going to kind of embrace new ways to describe women who happen to be moms who have blogs and maybe talk about their kids but maybe not.

Pat Flynn: So, is this like – I almost feel like because it has that name and there are just so many established bloggers out there in this sort of group, it's sort of like an exclusive sort of almost like a club almost to be a part of. I feel like there's a really deep connection between all the mommy bloggers that someone on the outside might sort of feel kind of unwelcome.

For example, let's say there's a particular woman in my audience right now listening who would love to blog about her kids but feels like maybe it's a little too late or that there's just a group of powerful women out there already that would kind, I don't know, not welcoming as much.

Meagan Francis: Yeah.



Pat Flynn: What would you say to somebody like that who wants to get sort of into this crowd too? Would love to blog about their lives and their kids and helping other people and getting brands to come to them? Is it too late? What would you say to them?

Meagan Francis: I don't think it's too late. I think that's very – it's really easy to feel that way because you can look at the blog world and sort of see – there is definitely the perception if not the reality of an A-list or the cool crowd or whatever. I think – but you always have to keep in mind that even there are bloggers leaving all the time. There are people who just get tired of it and move on to other things and there are people coming up all the time. And some of the most successful bloggers I know just started like a year or two ago. And for whatever reason, whatever they were doing really hit a nerve. So you never know. That's one thing I would say.

Another thing is, you have to kind of be in this space for a while and reach – I have a good friend and her blog is SimpleMom.net and her blog is huge. And I remember her saying at a conference one, when you're trying to figure out kind of where you fit and how to infiltrate this world that can seem very cliquy sometimes, is to reach down. So reach out to people who are maybe at a little bit lower level than you, reach across.

So like reach out to people who are doing what you do and then reach out. And that's how you'll get the people who you perceived as being higher up than you. If you reach out to those people, they are so accessible usually, almost always. There's always an exception but – and they are so willing to help out and they're so willing to help you promote your stuff.

Going to conferences really, really helps. I know that sometimes that can be hard to work into your budget but that's really sometimes the tipping point for where you start to make those connections that really make a difference because otherwise you can kind of feel like you're just sitting at home typing into a box. And that's no fun. And it does take time because it's such a crowded niche and there are so many of us. It kind of takes some time to figure out who you are, where do you fit in this whole world.

But I think if you're consistent and you show up and you do it and you make an effort to comment to another people's blogs, read other people's stuff, share other people stuff, I think it's just like any niche. You have to be in it. You have to be sharing. You have to be offering value to your communities. If you're on Twitter and you're of course linking to your stuff but you're linking to other people, you're engaging in conversation, all those things. I don't it's that different from other niches. I really don't.

I do think it has the illusion of being really super crowded but I think when you look at mommy blogging as a whole and then – it's probably like business blogging. You could look at it as a whole or you could say, "What other niches within it?" OK. You got like your Mormon mommy bloggers. You've got your mom bloggers who write about their kids with special needs. You have your mom bloggers who write a lot about baking and



food. You have ones who write about crafts. There are a lot of niches and a lot of opportunities to get into those niches.

Pat Flynn: That's a great point. And you were talking about earlier about how it important it is in the mommy blogger niche to reach out and to just put yourself in there and develop relationships. And I think that's just advice that's great for anybody in any niche. I know for me and for anybody really, like when I see other successful other entrepreneurs, they never did it all by themselves. They were never alone during the process. They were always developing relationships and creating relationships not just with their audience but other people in the same niche.

Like you said, not just people who are higher but people on the same level and also people lower because sometimes you never know what those sort of lower level bloggers can become.

Meagan Francis: Right.

Pat Flynn: They can then become an A-lister who will help you out or bring you along with them which is sort of kind of what happened to me and what's happened to a lot of people. And I like what you said, I'm even thinking of the online business niche and a lot of other niches where people have just recently come on board and sort of became a star really quickly.

Meagan Francis: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: It's possible. And you have to kind of look at those people and see and try to figure out how did that happen or why did that happen. And you know what? It's never sort of random.

Meagan Francis: No, it's not. It's not. And I think too like one thing that I think mom bloggers have been a little bit reluctant to do is embrace the business side. There's sort of this apologetic feeling across the niche, like, "We really just want to have a community. We really want to talk about our kids. We got this money coming in and that's cool too." And I was pretty unapologetic about the fact that when I launched my blog, I was doing it not necessarily thinking it was going to become its own business because I really didn't know what it was going to be.

But I wanted it to help me earn money because I was working. I needed to earn money and I couldn't justify putting time into something that wasn't ever going to – so whether it was a platform for a book or whether it was going to help me sell that book or whatever it was going to become, it had to become something profitable in some way.

And I think a lot of mom bloggers have had a hard time kind of embracing that. One thing I would caution somebody who maybe just wants to start off writing about their



families, really know what you're getting into it for. If you truly just want to journal about your family life, that's fantastic. But I've noticed a lot of people that when they start off that way and maybe they get six months in and then they get their first brand sponsorship or they get an offer to do something they're like, "Oh, but this is like a journal. So like am I selling my kids?" It's like that very confusing.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: They kind of go through that. I never really went through that because I always knew my blog was not about my kids. I wasn't using – I wasn't exploiting my kids to sell something. It was like I never had that sort of inner conflict because it had never been the point of my blog to begin with.

So I think if you're getting into it now and you think at some point, you want to make money on it, it really helps to figure out the things that you're going to write about. I mean it sounds – I think women sometimes especially they feel like that's so calculating. Like you're going to write a blog, it should be art. It can't just be this thing that you think about like a business. But you know what? It can be art. But then you might not make any money.

Pat Flynn: Right, right.

Meagan Francis: So you have to know what you're getting into it for.

Pat Flynn: Right. I mean I think there's a lot of things that people in different niches come along from other niches of course. I mean that's something I've noticed is how very little sort of selling is actually done on the mommy blog side.

Meagan Francis: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: It's nice to know that really, the money is coming from the bigger brands out there although I think a lot of people in your niche can benefit or use similar strategies. The strategies that for instance, I use to take things really to the next level and not only just because of money but also, help more people at the same time which I think all of the – everybody wants to do or hopefully.

Now, that's something that potentially that you or other people in your niche can take away from someone in my space. But what's – obviously, you know a lot of other mommy bloggers. Is it OK to say that?

Meagan Francis: You know what? I wouldn't.

Pat Flynn: OK.



Meagan Francis: It's OK. We won't hurt you. But honestly, it's like such a divisive term. I don't know. I always tell people, "When in doubt, don't say mommy blogger."

Pat Flynn: OK. What's your ...

Meagan Francis: I just say blogger – mom bloggers. I don't know. Something about the word mommy just ...

Pat Flynn: Yeah, OK. I see what you're saying. Well, I'm sorry. I apologize for that.

Meagan Francis: That's OK. No, it's fine. I hear it so much. It doesn't bother me anymore but ...

Pat Flynn: OK. My apologies to anyone out there listening who maybe a mom blogger, I don't mean to offend at all.

Meagan Francis: I know. Absolutely.

Pat Flynn: But obviously, you're in this space and you know a lot of people and you talk and you go to conferences, what sort of the trends – what's working right now for you that you think a lot of other niches can learn from?

Meagan Francis: Well, absolutely. Like I think that one thing – and this is not actually answering the question correctly. But one thing I'm seeing working for a lot of other bloggers, they want to start doing is eBooks. That's something that I think is getting really big.

Pat Flynn: Like Kindle eBooks?

Meagan Francis: Kindle eBooks or even just downloadable .PDFs which surprised me at first. Coming from the world of having done some traditionally published books and I did my one, *The Happiest Mom* and I also did a couple of other ones. And there was a lot of snobbery around eBooks because for so long, they were seen as sort of vanity publishing. And it was like, well anybody can get in. Anybody can do it. So then how do you know it's any good?

And I think what we are realizing now is the way you know it's any good is if it's any good, people will say it's good. And if it's not, they'll say it's not. That's how you know.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: But I mean, it seems so obvious now. But I do think that there's that world that still wants that gatekeeper that has a hard time with like a peers deciding whether things are good or not. It's like it's a little bit of snobbery. But anyway, that's something that I've seen mom bloggers doing really successfully. So maybe it's



something as simple as like a meal planning workbook or I've seen really successful mom bloggers who are focusing on different specialty diets like vegan diets or gluten-free diets do little cookbooks where they write about the recipes they're doing or like there was even one who did like a 30-day cleansing, I want to say it was like going no sugar and all that kind of stuff like a cleanse diet.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: Some of those get really big and it depends on your niche and it depends on your audience. But it's a really nice because the thing that can be really frustrating about ad sales and I don't know how much ad – do you do ad sales, Pat?

Pat Flynn: Not on the Smart Passive Income, no.

Meagan Francis: I didn't think you did. OK. But one thing that can be really frustrating about that is that you feel like you're getting so little in return for your readers. You're like, "Man, I have – like maybe I have 25,000 really loyal readers or I have 50,000 really loyal readers." And then what does that equal in ad sales? Hardly anything if you're doing like a network that's paying one or two dollars CPM or whatever they are paying.

So I find that like the eBooks are a way to – for those people who maybe have moderate size audiences to connect with their readers more directly and really help them out and not just have an ad somewhere on their site that's maybe making them money and maybe not. So that's one thing.

And then another thing that a lot of us are starting to do now is video. And that's something that I think I'm a little behind the 8-ball on maybe. But amazingly, a lot of bloggers aren't doing video. It just surprises me.

Pat Flynn: Yeah. No, you're absolutely right. And in the space I'm in, we tend to think or hope to think that we're sort of ahead in the game of that sort of stuff. And yes, videos definitely trending and still even in the space that I'm in. In blogging space, and also online marketing, there's still a lot of room for people doing videos. So I think that's absolutely a huge thing.

And I remember in 2011, Corbett Barr from ThinkTraffic.net had me on as a guest saying what's one traffic building strategy that you think is going to work from this point forward? And I predicted video was going to be huge. So I just – it's actually true. And I really think that you sort of just have to get uncomfortable. I'm not saying this to you, Meagan, but just to everybody out there. It's not an easy thing to do but you just have to do it and you're going to get better. And I remember my first video, I hate it. But it's still out there.

Meagan Francis: And you watch it and just cringing.



Pat Flynn: Oh yes. Like I turn it off halfway or like after five seconds like I shouldn't put myself through this. But you know what? A lot of people don't think about things like you are thinking about when you're watching yourself. They just want the good content and that's it really. And so, you just got to do it.

And now, YouTube is the second – number two search engine in the world. Those people just starting their career who are on YouTube. YouTube has connected as far as search engine optimization with Google. It's just – and really, you can build a deeper relationship than you can with just text. So I think that's really cool about in the mom blog world that that's going to be ...

Meagan Francis: It's starting to get bigger. It's slow but it's starting to get bigger. And for people who do want to work with brands, that's a big thing for brands right now. They want to see video. To them, I think that's just an easier way because it's one thing to write about a product. Sometimes it can be very clunky to try to insert a product into your editorial text but it can be very natural in video and it's so visual. It just makes a lot of sense. So anyone who wants to be doing that kind of thing, that's an area to really be looking at and Pinterest.

Pat Flynn: Oh yeah.

Meagan Francis: Honestly, Pinterest. I'm on there and I'm really working that angle but man, there are some bloggers who literally went from nothing and became, I don't want to say overnight successes because I think that's a little misleading, but they became very, very fast-rising stars because they really tap into Pinterest. And that obsession with beautiful pictures and text on the pictures and just – you really study it. See what people are doing that are really great at what they do and don't copy them but you know what I mean.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, absolutely. But before we finish up here again, Meagan, thank you for your time today. A couple traffic-building tips for our readers out there.

Meagan Francis: Sure.

Pat Flynn: I mean you were talking numbers like 25,000 to 50,000 loyal readers which probably means that you have a lot more traffic than that obviously, what are some tips you have for us?

Meagan Francis: Well honestly, that's something that I think can feel very random at times for a lot of people who are blogging about personal things. And I think that – one thing that I've noticed that really helps is to write and I know you've talked about this before, so this is why I love your show because every time I listen to it I'm like, "Yes! I love what you just said." But I don't remember if it was you or one of your guests who was talking about writing the epic post. I think that was ...



Pat Flynn: Yeah, Corbett Barr.

Meagan Francis: Yeah, OK.

Pat Flynn: Writing epic BS word.

Meagan Francis: Yeah, that's right. I don't cuss on my blog. But I do in real life but not on my blog. But anyway, so I think that's so amazing because really sometimes, all it takes is to write. Sometimes there's that temptation to feel your – like very good content. And I kind of spun my wheels a little bit on this and I'm still learning. I don't think any of us – the great thing is – I don't think any of us have it figured out yet, right? We're all still kind of learning as we go because this is such an uncharted ...

Pat Flynn: Yeah, Wild, Wild West just like you said earlier.

Meagan Francis: It's the Wild West. But one thing I realized is that one awesome post that maybe took me a whole week to write isn't – it's not just today. It's not just the hits I get on it today. It's which post are people still coming back to two or three, four years later? It's those posts. So sometimes like the temptation to feel your – have a post every single day of the week just to make sure people keep coming back. And that was for a while a big thing like make sure you post every day. You get this advice, "Make sure you put a really short post every day." And I was trying to do that. That's not my style.

What I'm realizing is that my style is to write longer posts that are really packed with information and sometimes I can only write a couple of those in a week. And what ends up happening is maybe they don't get the traffic on the front end that I want but those posts go – they get out there in the world and they hang around and people share them. People are still sharing them years later. They stay. They have lasting power. They have so much more staying than the posts I just threw up one day on a Tuesday because I didn't really have anything to say and I just had to have some content.

Pat Flynn: What's one post that you remember that you've written that's kind of taken off like that?

Meagan Francis: So I wrote this one – I think they were the first one I ever wrote that really got crazy big like that was I wrote this post about buying this dress. I was going to a conference and I usually like a lot of moms I know, I buy my clothes at the clearance rack at Target and I went to this boutique in my town and I tried this dress on and I just felt so pretty in this dress. So I know a lot of your readers are probably like "oh gosh" but it was awesome. Like it was much more money than I ever would spend usually on a dress.

Pat Flynn: Right, right.



Meagan Francis: But I decided to buy it. And then I wrote about it and I included pictures of myself. What ended up happening is I went to this conference and then they happened to have a photographer on site who was doing like photo sessions. So I ended up like on the corner in the street of Manhattan with this photographer taking pictures of me and it was so surreal because I'm like this mom of five and I live in this little town in the Midwest. And so, here I am in this dress and blah, blah, blah.

So I wrote all about it and I just – my point was we scrimped on things sometimes and there is this sort of – at the same time, there was this Facebook status going around that basically said like, "I'm the mom who never washes my hair and it's like a point of pride because my kids are everything to me and I have no life," essentially was the point of this Facebook status. So it was getting widely – that was getting widely shared.

And I said, "Hey guys, it's OK for us to like do things for ourselves. That's OK. It's all right for us to wash our hair and put on a little make-up or whatever and take some time. And it doesn't mean we're selfish. And being selfish isn't always such a bad thing."

So for whatever reason, I didn't expect it but this post hit a huge nerve and I got – that probably got me like hundreds of just subscribers from that post and it was crazy because I never – I didn't expect it. But it was really heartfelt. I spent a lot of time on that post. And for whatever reason, it was just one of those posts that just hit a nerve and got shared all over the place and still does. I still sometimes will get like incoming hits from that post and traffic and I'll go see where it came from and someone posted it on a forum somewhere.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: I'm like I can't believe people are still reading this.

Pat Flynn: That's cool, that's really cool. And I have to say that I have been spending a little bit more money than I usually do on fashion as well. I'm going to a lot of conferences and if your listeners have watched my New Media Expo presentation, you'll see I'm like in this vest and I talked about my fashion a little bit there. So yeah, I'm totally in agreement with you there.

But as far as the post itself, I think it took off for a number of different reasons. One, just that it was real. The story is an amazing story. You said, you included pictures in there. The timing was just right. And it was a little bit controversial too, which I know is a strategy that Derek Halpern talks about a lot. I mean he goes all out with being controversial and is very strategic about that.

But I think because of this post that was going around on Facebook and the timing of that plus your sort of opposite stance on it and just – I think that's great. And obviously, this kind of stuff stands the toll of time. It's not just like this only matters this



week. This is something that's important for all people who are in your audience all the time.

Meagan Francis: Right. And it was – and it did skirt the edges of being controversial. That's where usually where I stand. I don't like it to be controversial but I find sometimes just – even if you're not comfortable taking a really strong stand, sometimes just skirting the edge and it helps. Yeah, it does, it does. It gets people thinking.

Pat Flynn: Absolutely. And that kind of establishes who you are and what your beliefs are online who other people who have the same beliefs can connect with and people who have opposite beliefs can share their opinion on. So it's all synched up together. So that's really cool. And you know what Meagan, thank you. I don't want to take up too much of your time.

Meagan Francis: Actually Pat, I was going to ask – can I ask you a question?

Pat Flynn: Of course.

Meagan Francis: I don't want to take too much of your time either but I know I'm going to have like a lot of my listeners listening, my readers listening to this and who I really want to pick your brain about affiliate.

Pat Flynn: Dude, I could talk for hours about affiliate marketing. So yeah, maybe we could do ...

Meagan Francis: Yeah. Well, one thing that I'm seeing is that – because it's not an area – I don't think a lot of mom bloggers are really getting into. And I know you can't give a whole rundown on – well, what I will say to anyone listening is go find out his other podcast on affiliate marketing but I think it really was when I listened to one of your podcasts, I was like, "Oh my gosh, why am I not doing this?"

Pat Flynn: Right.

Meagan Francis: Seriously. And I don't think that a lot of mom bloggers are. I haven't seen a lot of that. Maybe the occasional Amazon post or something but it's just not something that's really taken over that world yet. So if you write about that, I guarantee you.

Pat Flynn: Sure. I mean yeah. I mean I would love it if your audience came over and check out Smart Passive Income podcast #41 which is [Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way](#). And it's really about how I do it in a way where yes, I'm making money off of recommending other products to other people but I'm having those people come back to me and say, "Thank you for finding this and sharing it with me." And that is how you want to approach affiliate marketing.



You want to approach it as if those products you're selling are your own. You want to know them that well which means you actually have to use them which oddly, the space that I'm in, a lot of people don't do. They promote products that they don't or haven't necessarily used and I think that's a huge risk because you are risking the trust that you have with your audience. And yes, if that product is terrible, they're going to be angry at that company but they're going to be even more angry at you because you were the one that recommended it.

I always make sure that I go all out as far as showing people what they're going to get when they get it. I have a couple – for instance, I share host and domain company, Bluehost, that I recommend. And no, I just don't recommend it but I show people exactly in a video how to set that up step-by-step because what that does is it gets people comfortable of what they're going to get before they buy it.

And also, it just gives them peace of mind as far as understanding a certain process that they probably don't know about yet. And then there's a whole bunch of tips just like that which are really easy, making sure to offer support at the point of where you're actually selling that particular product or recommending it, making sure to say that, "Yes, I am actually going to get a commission if you do go to this link."

Which a lot of people don't even know that that could be the case and they'll go out of their way to make sure that if you've deliver enough value to people that they're going to want to go to that link for you because there's no extra cost to them and that's something else I also make sure to share every once in a while. At no extra cost to you, this doesn't cost you anything.

Meagan Francis: Right.

Pat Flynn: "You just have to go to this convenient link that's right here and I'll get paid for it. Thank you in advance. If you have any questions about this before or after you purchase, let me know." And typically, most people don't even ask me any questions. But just because that sort of – there's that security there that in case there are any questions that they're more comfortable to go through it.

So I mean, I could for again, hours about that.

Meagan Francis: That's fine. Well, that was a really good – it was a really good, quick summary. And I'll definitely direct people toward that.

Pat Flynn: OK.

Meagan Francis: That episode. But I think what you're saying about having that relationship and the trust with your readers is what makes it that way because it's your authority and being really helpful because you can throw names of products all day long



but if you don't kind of hold someone's hand and maybe walk them through it, they might be less willing or they wouldn't even think of it.

Pat Flynn: I will say that as a blogger who's now sort of – I know I'm pretty popular. I'm getting a lot of messages from brands and other people who have products who want me to promote them as an affiliate. And it's really – it would be really easy to make a lot of money by promoting all of them.

Meagan Francis: Right.

Pat Flynn: But my audience comes first. I have to make sure it does for you and for mostly the mom bloggers out there. So just always keeping that in mind and always having that be the sort of decision-maker or the motivator behind the decisions that you make for anything especially for like marketing. It's important.

Meagan Francis: Yeah. Thank you. That was a good summary.

Pat Flynn: Sure. Yeah, absolutely. And thank you for that. And the last question I want to ask you is if anyone wants to find out more about you, where would they go? Where should they go?

Meagan Francis: They can go – OK. So there are two places you can find me online. I have my blog, TheHappiestMom.com, pretty easy to find. And I also am now kind of just – I've just started blogging under my own name again just for fun, just so that I have a place to write about things that don't fit under sort of the mom umbrella. And that's Meagan, which is a little bit confusing spelling. It's MeaganFrancis.com and I write about things like working life. And I'm planning a trip abroad with my family next year and I write about that kind of stuff there. Just stuff that doesn't necessarily fit under the other brand.

Pat Flynn: Awesome. Well, I'll make sure to put those links in the show notes for you and also, we could find you on Twitter at your name, MeaganFrancis.

Meagan Francis: At MeaganFrancis, yes.

Pat Flynn: So, thank you so much for coming on. I really appreciate the time and just – if there's anything I can do for you in the future, just please let me know.

Meagan Francis: Thanks. This has been great, Pat.

Pat Flynn: Thank you.

Meagan Francis: Thanks so much.



Pat Flynn: All right. I hope you enjoyed that interview with Meagan from TheHappiestMom.com. Actually now, it's TheHappiestHome.com. She just rebranded. But either of those URLs would work. She's been doing amazing stuff and has amazing story and a great personality. Thank you so much, Meagan, for coming on the show. It's so fun to have you on.

And as always, the links and everything mentioned in the show can be found at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session62 since this is session 62. So head over there to get that and other helpful resources and please if you haven't already, feel free to head on over to ebooks-the-smart-way.com to get my free eBook about how to publish market and automate a killer eBook. Over 50,000 people have downloaded it so far. So if you hadn't done so already, do it, ebooks-the-smart-way.com

Thank you so much again for taking the time out of your day to listen to me. I really appreciate you. And until next time, stay healthy and I'll see you in the next session. Peace.

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