



**SPI Podcast Session #66 –  
Niche Site Duel 2.0 (Research Interview)  
SEO and Keyword Research  
with Spencer Haws**

Show notes at: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session66>

**Pat Flynn:** This is The Smart Passive Income Podcast with Pat Flynn Session #66.

Welcome to The Smart Passive Income Podcast where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now your host, he used to create stop motion movies when he was a kid, Pat Flynn.

**Pat Flynn:** Yo, what's up? This is Pat Flynn and welcome to session #66 of The Smart Passive Income Podcast. We are currently in research mode, in heavy duty research mode in preparation for the upcoming Niche Site Duel 2.0, which is a live case study where I'm going to be walking through the process of building a website from scratch, picking the niche, building the site, creating the content, marketing it, revealing everything along the way good and bad with the hopes of getting it to rank high in Google, and eventually start to earn an income from it.

I've done this before in over two years ago with Niche Site Duel 1.0 and it was a complete success. Not only did I take a site from nothing to number one in Google in less than three months and created a brand new income stream for myself, one that has since earned over \$50,000 but it also showed a lot of other people what to do step-by-step and also what not to do because I definitely made some mistakes along the way and that's part of this process.

And hundreds of people decided to take action after that and followed through and have created sites of their own. Many of them now are earning a side income and some people are even doing so well where they got to quit their jobs and are starting their own sort of businesses and empires based on those niche sites that they created initially.

You can find all of the documentation regarding that process over at [NicheSiteDuel.com](http://NicheSiteDuel.com), that's for Niche Site Duel 1.0. However, that's going to be the home for Niche Site Duel 2.0 as well for those of you out there who are wondering sort of where all that's going to go down, NicheSiteDuel.com.

Now, a lot has changed since that first go around which is why I wanted to do this again. And this time, I'm taking a more sort of educational approach before I get started. And what I'm doing is I'm interviewing a ton of experts in search engine



optimization, in content creation, and in keyword research, people who know and are experiencing what's working today. And if you're listening to this in the future, again, I recommend you check out [NicheSiteDuel.com](http://NicheSiteDuel.com), which is where this new case study/experiment will be housed. And any updates to the strategies that happen between now and whenever you're listening to this will be posted there as well.

So, what I'm doing is I'm interviewing all of these experts and asking, well really, just what's working today so we can use those strategies for when I do the Niche Site Duel. And a lot of you who are following along can use them if you choose to use them as well too. And so, for the next two or three episodes, you're going to hear different experts takes on sort of what to do today to get a site rank in Google and to have it perform really well.

And today, we're going to start with Spencer Haws from [NichePursuits.com](http://NichePursuits.com) or [NichePursuits.com](http://NichePursuits.com), however you want to say it. Spencer and I just recently met in person last month at Social Media Marketing World but we've been really good friends online for probably close to two years now. And he makes a living by and he's been this doing for a while, by building niche sites. And now also more recently, he is adding to his income stream because he has an amazing tool out there that's doing really well and it's really helpful for keyword research. That tool is called [Long Tail Pro](#) and it's actually a tool I'm going to be using in my demonstrations for Niche Site Duel 2.0.

I know I promoted the Market Samurai before and I still do. It's a great tool. I still use it today but I just wanted to give a lot of you the sort of other side of the story with Long Tail Pro and show you how that works because a lot of people are using that tool right now and I want to show you sort of how I use it to the best of its ability. I'm really starting to enjoy the software so I'm really looking forward to sharing that with you.

Anyway, Spencer is on today because well for one, he's just awesome and super cool. And more recently, he ranked a niche site of his own. He's going to share with us his keyword selection process, how he got the website to rank, another cool tips and strategies that you and I can take away as we prep for the official launch of NSD 2.0. So without further delay, here is the very educational, inspiring, and informative interview with Spencer.

Actually, before I begin, like with all the research I'm doing right now, I'm just hunting for what seems to be working right now. But I have yet to decide exactly what strategies I'm going to use. So just keep that in mind. Some of what Spencer says I might follow. A lot of it I'm sure I will. Other things that he and other people suggest, I might not.

So you're going to see a post announcing my exact strategy or at least the plan in the step-by-step process to go along with that that I'm going to take sometime soon on the blog. So make sure you head on over to [SmartPassiveIncome.com](http://SmartPassiveIncome.com) when you have a



chance. Subscribe to the updates. Sign up for the newsletter, and if you haven't already, just do it now.

So in the meantime once again, here is Spencer from NichePursuits.com whether you have a site already or not, this stuff is going to be helpful for you. So let's do this.

All right. What's up, Spencer? Thanks for coming on the show today. How are you?

**Spencer Haws:** Hey, I'm doing great, Pat. It's great to be here. I appreciate it very much.

**Pat Flynn:** We're really excited to have you on here for a number of reasons. You have a blog at NichePursuits.com that has pretty much exploded the last couple of years. I've been following you for quite some time now. And recently, you've been doing some really cool stuff with some new niche sites that you've been creating and sharing publicly on your site and we'll get into that. But before, I want to kind of start from the beginning and talk about you and sort of how you came to be online. So, why don't you kind of give us a quick rundown of how you got started online?

**Spencer Haws:** Absolutely. I really started out building websites more of just a hobby to see if I could get something up online. Back in 2005 I think was the first time I bought a domain and tried to build a website. And it was really just to see if I could learn some html, get something on this thing called the World Wide Web and see what would happen. I had really no intention of making money from it. It was just sort of a hobby that I did after I was done working for the day.

And then I decided, well, why don't I create something that I'm actually interested in? And so, my very first blog was actually a finance blog, a personal finance blog because I was in the financial services industry. I got a degree in finance. And so, it was something that I was somewhat knowledgeable about and I figured I can put up this great blog and try to, at that point, I decided, let's see if I make a little bit of money.

But essentially, I didn't know what I was doing as far as getting traffic and marketing and developing a true readership for that blog and it went nowhere. But that initial experience led me to researching how does Google work? How did the search engines work? How do you actually get people to come to your site and all these other things?

It opened up a whole world for me that I explored for the next few years. And eventually in 2008 is finally when the light bulb went on for me that – and there's a lot of stories in between here obviously, over a few years that depending on how deep you want to dig, that's fine.

But essentially, I had always been trying to go after these big topics like credit cards and personal finance, all these things that were super competitive, which I didn't understand at the time. But eventually, the light bulb went on for me that if I wanted to



rank in Google and get some free traffic, I needed to be targeting niches or keywords that were just easy to rank for. And finally when that light bulb went on, I built a couple of really small niche sites that didn't make very much money but at about \$30 a month each, that was more than I was making on these other blog or other ventures that I had put so much time and energy into. I was making this money passively.

And so from those initial couple of sites at the end of 2008, early 2009, I started to replicate that process over and over again for a couple of years still and of course, along the way, got better at the process. But I had a portfolio of lots of niche sites and in 2011, I quit my full-time job, and I've been doing it ever since.

**Pat Flynn:** Nice, awesome. Now, when you say lots of niche sites, how many were you talking?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. So when I quit my job, I had about 200 niche sites.

**Pat Flynn:** Wow!

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, it's a huge number. And the number is still about the same, right around 200 niche sites, some don't do as well and those domains expire and then I build new ones. And so – but yeah, so I have a lot.

**Pat Flynn:** Do you sort of felt like you just saw success a couple of times and you just want to replicate it over and over and over again and then sometimes it would work really well and sometimes maybe not so much and you just got to this point where it just kept building and it was just – was it a fun process for you?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. I really got excited about searching out and finding these business opportunities as I saw them, these keywords. That really was exciting for me and that's what kept me going is I always saw a new opportunity. I did research and I saw these different topics that I knew that if I just built a site on it, I could rank very quickly in Google. I could be getting free traffic. And sometimes, my sites would only make a dollar a day but then sometimes I had other sites that would make \$20 or \$30 a day just – it ranged or sometimes they didn't pan out at all. But I was very excited about the process, in particular, the keyword research and seeing all these opportunities that were out there.

And so, I replicated the process. I started getting other people involved as far as outsourcing so that I could build the business and do things quicker rather than just on my own. And yeah, that's exactly what I did. I built a business out of it.

**Pat Flynn:** That's awesome. Now, I do want to get into keyword research a little bit because that's obviously a very important part and that's sort of what got you started was seeing keywords sort of synonymous with opportunity. But 200 niche sites, how do you manage that? I know for me for example, I have the Smart Passive Income Blog. It



takes a lot of time. And I do have a couple of niche sites that still take a few hours a month I guess. But 200, how are you organizing yourself and keeping yourself on top of all of that?

**Spencer Haws:** To be honest, Pat, most of my sites don't require any ongoing maintenance. For the most part, I built these sites up to a certain point and they started ranking in Google. And essentially, I'm satisfied with that. A lot of them, I'm not trying to build into something huge. I'm happy with the dollar a day or whatever it is that they're making. And so, after the first month or two, I put in that initial effort to get the content up, the site ranking, I basically, leave it there and don't touch it at all. So, it really is fairly passive.

Now, there are some of my bigger sites, the ones that do a little bit better and maybe they're only a half dozen or so of those that I do pay a little bit more attention to that I will either add some content to or do some other things to actively manage. So, the amount of time that I'm spending on existing sites is actually relatively small, only a few hours every month. I spend more of my time really finding new opportunities and building new sites.

**Pat Flynn:** Awesome, awesome. Do you feel like with – I mean you have a portfolio of 200 plus websites to look at, so I want to get your opinion on this, do you feel like when you build the site up and then you sort of "let it go" or it's gotten to a point where you can just sort of walk away from for a little bit, do you feel like that eventually they will not be as high in the rankings or that they kind of decelerate I guess is you could say or do you find that they stick around and stay up there or even accelerate?

**Spencer Haws:** That's a very good question. And the answer is all over the board. Some of them do stick there. A lot of them don't. And in particular, I mean, you have to think about the time that I was building these niche sites was 2010, 2011. I built a lot of these before the Penguin, Panda, other updates. So of course when a lot of those Google updates occurred, a lot of my niche sites were affected where they weren't ranking as well in Google just like everybody else out there.

And so, the reality is, is that yes, Google could change things down the road and so some of my sites that maybe are ranking well today maybe won't be ranking quite as well tomorrow. But I still do have quite a few of my sites that I built two and three years ago that I haven't touched over that period essentially but still are bringing in income each and every month.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, awesome. Now, you had mentioned Google changing their algorithms and stuff like Penguin update, Panda update, I mean there's a whole slew of updates that they just keep coming.

**Spencer Haws:** Sure.





**Pat Flynn:** How has your business changed from before when you had – when you’re doing keyword research and building these sites and sort of outsourcing that process and sort of a well-oiled machine versus what you’re doing now? How has your business changed or is it the same?

**Spencer Haws:** It has changed. I mean the core idea is still the same in the fact that I’m looking for these low competition keywords that I can rank for and I’m building sites that I can rank in Google and get the traffic for and then monetize those sites. So that core business model is the same. But just like you said, I mean some of the processes have definitely changed.

Before, I was a little less focused on building out more quality sites. I mean I think that if I’m honest with myself and if everybody is honest with themselves, that we’re building sites, you could essentially build a site that only had two or three pages of content and with outsource content and just throw it up, and using certain link-building tactics, you can get it to rank very, very quickly. And that just isn’t the case anymore.

And so, the velocity at which I’m building sites has significantly decreased so I’m building less and less sites every month. But the sites that I am building are a little bit bigger as far as the amount of content that I’m putting up, the contents are higher quality, and I’m focused on different link building tactics than I was previously, doing things a little bit differently. So, we can dig into that but yes, my processes definitely have changed a little bit, more focused on quality.

And ideally, I’m trying to build this into something a little bit bigger rather than going after sites that are just making a dollar a day. I’m really trying to set my threshold at something that I can build a site that’s going to make \$500 a month or something. So definitely, a little bit bigger sites.

**Pat Flynn:** Awesome. Yeah, it just seems like that’s what Google is hoping for these days, is more quality type of websites. And it’s cool to see that you and I think everybody else now knows that we got to do more than just these three, four-page sites.

**Spencer Haws:** Right.

**Pat Flynn:** Now, starting – fast forwarding to now and sort of what we’re all doing now, obviously, keyword research is very important like you said, finding those low competition keywords. What is your criteria and method for finding the keywords that you then process into a website?

**Spencer Haws:** So, there are some very basic things like the keyword needs to get a certain amount of search volume every month. And so, I like to find keywords that at least get 2000 searches a month and these are exact match searches. I find that one of



the most common mistakes that people make is that they will look at a broad match and that's very different from exact matches as I'm sure you're well aware.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah.

**Spencer Haws:** But I throw that out there as sort of a new person mistake. You should always look at the exact match because you know that's how many people really are searching for that exact keyword each and every month. So, 2000 is really a minimum. I like keywords that are around 5000 exact match searches a month or more. And so, that's a basic criterion. There are some other things that I look at like three-word phrases tend to do better than like one-word phrases and there are different reasons for that. A little bit longer phrases just tend to be easier to rank for.

**Pat Flynn:** Right.

**Spencer Haws:** But really, what I'm looking at and this can be a very in depth conversation here is how difficult are existing or how competitive are the existing sites that are ranking in Google right now, the top ten sites in Google? I look at those and really analyze that competition because that's who I have to be. It doesn't matter the number of competing pages, I know that that's a metric that's thrown out there sometimes like, "Oh, there's only 50,000 competing pages for this phrase that means it's low competition." Well no, not really. You're only competing against the top ten sites in Google.

And so, that's what you should be looking at. And so, there are some specific things that I look at there. And when I determine that I can outrank those top ten sites, I build a site on that keyword.

**Pat Flynn:** Awesome. OK. So you had mentioned 2000 to 5000 exact match searches per month, three-word phrases typically less competition just because there's more words in there than one or two word phrases, now how would you even start? Like yes, this is the criteria and we'll get into this sort of competition criteria in a second for everyone listening out there, but where do I even start like how do I – I know there are certain tools out there.

Obviously, you have Long Tail Pro which is an amazing keyword research tool that Spencer has created like a great one that competes with Market Samurai which is the one that I used to use. But I'm actually using the Long Tail Pro a lot more now.

So, what those tools do is it shows you this data of how many searches there are for a particular keyword and also the sort of competition metrics. But where do you even start? Like do I just start putting random words in there or start putting things I like in there and seeing what comes up?



**Spencer Haws:** Well, you could. You certainly do have to start with some sort of seed keywords. And there are lots of different ways that you can go about brainstorming for these seed keywords. A lot of times, I will go to like Amazon.com or eBay.com and look at the different either categories or top sellers.

I like to personally dig into some of the more, I don't know what the best word is, but sort of random or less popular categories, sort of the technology categories, maybe the things that people are excited about. But I look at maybe the really boring things like industrial parks or something to get some seed keywords that are just really out of my norm.

And so, I look at either Amazon or eBay. You can do all sorts of things just looking around you. If I just look on my desk, I've got a calculator, I've got a CD case, I've got some Rocketballz. Anyways, all of these could be seed keywords. But yeah, so using some popular shopping sites or pulling up a list of hobbies or other list, large list of just things and inputting some of those seed keywords is a good place to start.

**Pat Flynn:** Right. I mean for me, I remember when I was doing keyword research pretty heavily back in 2010 for the first round of the Niche Site Duel, I was just kind of wherever I went, I was just trying to notice things. Be a little bit more focused on what I was looking at or what I was hearing that I would normally. And whenever I found something interesting that just popped in my brain, I would put it in my iPhone as a note and then I would just stick it in Market Samurai or whatever keyword research tool that you – whatever you end up wanting to use and just seeing what the results are.

And what happens is you put seed keyword in, you get a result of about 800 other keywords related to it and then you could see where those searches are. You could filter down to the ones that are between 2000 or more and then see what the competition is. So I like looking at – and I think that's a good idea looking at Amazon, eBay, trying to see what you could do that's maybe a little less popular where you might be able to kind of have a heads up on what might be less competitive.

Now, when it comes to competition, what are the metrics that you're looking for exactly?

**Spencer Haws:** OK. So, the competition – there's a few different things that people should be looking at. And one of the most simple things is relevancy. Are the top ten results that are existing for whatever keyword it is, are they using that exact keyword in the title of their page? And tools like [Long Tail Pro](#), and I'm sure lots of others out there, will pull in the title of that page for the top ten sites.

So, if our keyword is survival knives, are the top ten sites using that exact keyword within the title of their page? And that's important because as simple as that sounds, sometimes there are top results in Google that aren't using that exact phrase and that's a sign of weakness out there. Other things to look at are the Page Authority, that's an





[SEOMoz](#) metric. The number of links pointing to the page and then to a lesser extent, PageRank, site age, and there are other things that you can look at that as well.

But in particular, as far as the number of links pointing to the page, that's very important. But you would also want to dig a little bit deeper. Are the links high quality? Are they actually valuable links as well? That's something you could do to dig a little bit deeper.

**Pat Flynn:** OK. So just to recap, as far as competition, when you find a keyword that might be perhaps between 2000 or a little bit more exact match searches per month then that's the first level of filter. The second level of filter is competition. How relevant is that keyword or how relevant are the top ten results in Google for that specific keyword? Are they using the keyword in the title? Number two, the Page Authority which – is that like a number you can get?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, that's a number provided by SEOMoz and it's actually a really, really good number that SEOMoz has basically put together to essentially – it's essentially a number that explains how well – I'm trying to think of the word that they use, arbitrary content would rank in Google on that page. Essentially, just saying, how authoritative is this page overall? And that Page Authority number takes into account already things like number of links. Essentially, PageRank, they use mozRank as their number.

So, it already takes into account a lot of those things, this Page Authority number but yeah, just how authoritative is that page overall.

**Pat Flynn:** OK. So we got relevancy, Page Authority from SEOMoz.com, number of links to that specific page, and then digging deeper, looking at the strength of those links which those tools can do for you, PageRank of a site and also site age to a lesser extent. So, looking at all those things, will it probably be easy just to kind of share with the audience kind of an example? I know you have a public niche site that you shared on your site that you're bringing people through the process from start to finish and you just recently got it to number one Google. So, that's awesome, man. Congrats on that.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, thank you.

**Pat Flynn:** I saw that you are making money from it. So maybe we can just start from the beginning with that site. How did you find the niche? What were the metrics like and the competition and then we'll go from there?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. No, I think that's great. That will give us a concrete example that we can talk about. So, the keyword that I picked for my public niche site project that I'm doing is "best survival knife." And the way that I initially found this keyword is I went out and I found a huge list of hobbies that are out there. And so, I just started typing in some of these seed keywords into Long Tail Pro. And one of the seed



keywords that I found, one of these hobbies that was on this list was I believe, it was knife making.

And so, when I input knife making in as a seed keyword, one of the related keywords was best survival knife. And it met the criteria. I don't remember the exact number of searches. I believe it's 4400 exact match searches a month. And so, when I dug a little bit deeper doing the competitor analysis, looking at the top ten results in Google, I liked what I saw.

And so, and we can look at, if you want me to explain that.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah.

**Spencer Haws:** What is on the top ten, yeah.

**Pat Flynn:** I like when you said, "I liked what I saw." What did you see?

**Spencer Haws:** Well, I'm actually pulling up a Long Tail Pro right now so I can have all the metrics right in front of me. But just like I explained to you, the first thing that I did and what I always do is I look at the title of the pages. And as I went through and read the title of the pages, I can actually see right now, one, two, three, four, about four of the results are not using the exact keyword, best survival knife.

At the time, the first couple of sites in fact in their title, it does say "survival knives." But it doesn't have the word "best," "best survival knife." And so, that was the first like aha. If I just target the keyword a little bit better than them, perhaps I've got a chance. Let's dig a little bit deeper.

So, that's the very first thing I did, relevancy and the title. I liked that the first couple of results weren't using my exact keyword. Then I looked at both the Page Authority and then the number of – it's called Juice Page Links that I look at. Again, this is an [SEOMoz](#) metric. And we pull out all of this metrics into Long Tail Pro.

**Pat Flynn:** Cool.

**Spencer Haws:** But essentially, Juice Page Links, that means the links that actually matter, that are actually carrying some weight that perhaps have some authority. And when I saw that I, and I can still see that there's about five or six of the results that are in the top ten of Google that have less than ten Juice Page Links. So they have very few quality links pointing to their site.

**Pat Flynn:** What would be a number that would be a red flag for us for that, for Juice Page Links?



**Spencer Haws:** I personally like to see multiple results that have less than 20. Once you start getting above 50 or so, that's usually just something that I avoid because I like to find things that are a lot less competitive. So 20 or less is maybe a good rough number. And I always like to see at least two of the top ten sites in Google that have weak metrics. So, there are certainly multiple here but I don't like to just see one weak site in the top ten. I like to see at least two if that makes sense.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah.

**Spencer Haws:** And so, I look at the Juice Page Links and that I can kind of confirm that with the Page Authority that I'm looking at here. Usually, a weak Page Authority is 30 or less and I do see a few results here that have 30 or less. And so, those are the primary things that I look at. And then I do, it's kind of an older metrics but I still – people like to look at PageRank still.

And so, I'll go over and look at the PageRank and then I can confirm that there are two or three results that have either a zero or PageRank here. And so overall, it looks like competitive first page of Google. So that's kind of very quickly how I look at things and what I saw in particular for this keyword.

**Pat Flynn:** OK, great. Question for you, at this point, you found the keyword that meets all the criteria, you're getting excited, do you know anything about best survival knives?

**Spencer Haws:** No, not really. It's one of those things that I needed to do some research on essentially. So no, I wasn't an expert on survival knives by any means. But what I did, and I don't always do this as in depth, I usually will just hire people that know about survival knives or whatever.

**Pat Flynn:** OK.

**Spencer Haws:** But actually – because this was a public project, I actually did dig in and do a lot of research on my own. And in fact, what I did at the very beginning is looked at all of these sites that are currently ranking in Google and thought to myself, how can I create something that's actually more valuable than they're providing right now? What can I create that is going to answer the person's query when they type in "best survival knife" that's going to give them better information than what's already out there?

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah.

**Spencer Haws:** And so when I thought that and looking at the results, I really – basically what I saw was a bunch of lists, these websites would list, "Here's what we think are the top five survival knives," or "Here's the top ten survival knives." They didn't really give a lot of reason. They sort of just said, "Here they are." And so, I



thought, you know what? I bet and as I did my research, I discovered that this is the case that really the best survival knife depends on what situation you're in, what are you using it for, are you hunting, are you just camping? So everybody's best survival knife is probably going to be very subjective. It's very different.

And so, I decided to compile a huge list of 50 potential survival knives and created a comparison shopping chart, is what I did. They had all sorts of things from price to quality of the steel to the length of the knife, and other things that people could then come to my site and could sort the different columns based on whether they could afford a certain knife or the quality of steel they wanted or how big of knife they wanted and find the best knife for them.

**Pat Flynn:** So, you're actually building something useful.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, yeah. That's what I'm trying to do, definitely, is that I basically wanted to really have the best, a really source out there for survival knives and I think I've done a pretty good job. And so, I created that and also did a bunch of research and wrote some great content. And essentially, wrote an article explaining what I just explained here is that everybody's survival knife, their best knife is going to be different. Here's a chart I've created. Here's what all the criteria is. And here's five of the knives that I think are really great but you do your own research.

**Pat Flynn:** Right, yeah. And this sort of reminds me of the same approach I took with [SecurityGuardTrainingHQ.com](http://SecurityGuardTrainingHQ.com), my first public niche site. And a lot of people were asking me, "Well, you don't know anything about security guard training. How are you going to do this?" And it was exactly what you just said, looking at what was existing out there on the top ten on Google, and seeing and approaching it as if I was someone typing in that keyword, looking for information about that.

And the same thing with me, there wasn't anything really good out there. So, I just created it myself. And I think that's OK to do. And if you – maybe you don't know much about that particular topic yet but if you feel like you have the ability to help people understand more about it, then do the research just like you did, Spencer.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah.

**Pat Flynn:** I mean that's really – I mean you deserved to be at number one if you're putting in that much effort.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think you're spot on that other people can do this. There are lots of niches out there that you really can create the best resource available out there. And in addition, since creating that chart and some of the initial content, I've now actually gone to [Elance.com](http://Elance.com) and hired somebody that is an expert on camping, survival gear, and other things to produce additional content. So now, the



additional content that's going up really is written by somebody that has all kinds of knives and does know what to look for, a little bit better than I personally would.

**Pat Flynn:** That's awesome. That's awesome. OK. I think the question we're all waiting for here is, well, how did you get it to rank so high in Google?

**Spencer Haws:** Well, to be honest, I think what I just explained is exactly why because of the keyword research. And I always stress this so much that the keyword research is by far the most important thing that you can do in creating these niche sites. And I know what we're going to get but I do want to stress this that finding that low competition keyword is by far the most important thing that you can do. If you find a bad keyword or a super competitive keyword, it doesn't matter how great your content is or how good your links are that you build to your site, chances are, you're not going to rank anywhere.

And so, keyword research is how I got it initially to rank or is one step. The great content I do think is so important. Yes, you can still get poor content to rank, unfortunately, on Google but I think for the longevity of the site, you need to have great, useful content. And then the final thing that we can dig into here is link building. I did have to do some sort of link building to get the site to rank in Google. And I did a few different things to build some links to the site.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah. I mean, I had just posted an article, a lot of you who listen to this may have read that or have seen the video with [Alex Becker](#) from Source Wave. And in that article, I talked about how really we have to do some kind of link building. I mean whether – there's different kinds of link building obviously. The one that Alex shared was a little bit more Grey/Black Hat than writing guest posts for example. But either way, you still have to create links I think in order to give yourself a little bit of a push.

So, I'm interested here about sort of what you did.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. I mean when it comes down to, you do have to let people know that you're out there and that includes building links so that Google knows that you are out there as well. So, here's my basic process. When I build my site and when it's brand new, I did what I'll call very minor link building for the first month or so, I did do some web directory submissions, some very basic web directory submissions and nothing fancy here, just 15 or maybe 20 general web directories that sort of let Google know that I'm out there and of course, these directories would list me there as well.

**Pat Flynn:** Where are these web directories? Like can you give us some example of one perhaps just so we know what kind of site you're talking about?

**Spencer Haws:** I would have to pull up my list. I actually – and I will give a reference to where I got all of these web directories, is [PointBlankSEO.com](#). Jon over there at [Point Blank SEO](#) ...





**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, Jon.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. Essentially, that's where I got this list. And let me see if I can find any real quick.

**Pat Flynn:** Well, I'll link to – or you can just send me a link later and I'll put in the show notes.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah.

**Pat Flynn:** So, don't worry about it. So, we'll keep going here.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, there's like Technorati.com, Blogs.com, Alltop.com, other web directories like that.

**Pat Flynn:** OK. And they happily accept URLs for new sites.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. All of them won't. Some do have a manual process that you may or may not get approved but a lot of them yeah. You'll get approved. So you won't have a 100% acceptance rate but you will get approved on some of them. Absolutely, for new sites.

**Pat Flynn:** Cool.

**Spencer Haws:** So, after I do that or around the same time, I'm also going out and I did this myself, making blog comments on relevant blogs. So, I went out and found bloggers that were writing about survival knives or survival gear or emergency preparedness, related topics and would actually read their article and make a genuine comment so they weren't spammy comments where I just said, "Hey, come checkout my new site." I basically just said, "Hey, great article." With my name like any sort of WordPress comment, your name links to your site. So ...

**Pat Flynn:** So, you wouldn't put any sort of anchor text in there as your name which I know a lot of people do.

**Spencer Haws:** I don't.

**Pat Flynn:** Some people do that when they leave comments on my blog still, which I'm like ...

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. No, I didn't. I didn't worry about any anchor text. It's just my name essentially for the most part. And what this does is it initially just gets you some links and I won't mention that these were no follow links probably. I didn't worry if they do follow or if they were from a high PageRank. I just wanted to find relevant blogs and



wanted to leave a comment. And again, these are just sort of a base of links to get some relevancy because Google does look at where links are coming from as far as are they relevant. So I think that gives me the relevancy factor.

And also, it gives me links coming from lots of different root domains and that's also another thing that's important. You don't want thousands of links coming from one or two sites, you want lots of links coming from lots of different domains. So that's what these base set of links gave me the relevancy and lots of linking root domains.

**Pat Flynn:** I think the relevancy thing is very important and that was something when I was doing the Niche Site Duel 1.0 with the security guard training, relevancy didn't matter.

**Spencer Haws:** Right.

**Pat Flynn:** It could have been any site linking to you that's a PR or whatever site that's bringing some link to send. And now, it seemed like the trend is after talking with Alex, after talking with you, Spencer, that the actual – where that link comes from actually matters and the content on that page and whatever is discussed on there actually matters as far as how relevant it is to your site.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, that absolutely helps. And so ideally, you will get all of your links from relevant places. That may or may not always be case but you should certainly try to.

**Pat Flynn:** That makes sense. I mean I don't know why that wasn't the case at first but ...

**Spencer Haws:** Just because maybe it was easy to do it otherwise. But now, hopefully we're doing it the way that we should.

**Pat Flynn:** Cool.

**Spencer Haws:** But then or maybe if you want to call this phase two, I'll move into a little bit more links and ...

**Pat Flynn:** This is around like month two you would say?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, this is probably around month two. So I really don't do a lot of link building during the first month. But as it moves into the second month, I'll do some things like maybe with Elance, I'll do some Web 2.0 properties, Wiki properties, and then places like GoArticles. You can still do some basic links there. Then there is [SlideShare](#). There is [Docstoc](#).

**Pat Flynn:** What's that last one, Docstoc?



**Spencer Haws:** Docstoc, it's kind of like a SlideShare if you're familiar with that.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, those two SlideShare and Docstoc, those are the sort of new sort of high quality link areas, I guess you could say. Before, it was YouTube and social media. Now, it seems like these sites, I keep hearing, as far as link building is concerned. So obviously, it takes a little bit of work to get a link on there because you need to have a sort of slideshow of some kind.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. And you really can just produce an article and turn it into either a slideshow or a PDF or something and upload it that way.

**Pat Flynn:** Right.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah.

**Pat Flynn:** I would think there is a lot of opportunity there too. I mean there's not very many people in the survival knife industry and creating slideshows. I mean if you created like an epic sort of slideshow, it could potentially be seen a lot.

**Spencer Haws:** No. Absolutely. So, there really is a lot that I could be doing even more than I have. Some of these initial things that I did really were just for the link building factor of it. But I could go back and create an audience in a lot of these places. People have said I could do quite well in Pinterest or on Pinterest with survival knives. Whether or not I could, I don't know. I could generate a Twitter following and do all sorts of things with the niche site of course. But this initial round was just for link building purposes to get my site to rank a little bit better in Google.

**Pat Flynn:** Right, right.

**Spencer Haws:** And so yeah, those are some of the basic things. Press releases, you can do a press or two in that. It doesn't have to be super complicated. Again, it can just be basically an article about your site that you do and some basic social bookmarking. So yeah, I mean that really is generally what I did for link building.

And then there is one other tactic that I use, a little bit more advanced that we could get into, if you would like. It was involving using an expired domain.

**Pat Flynn:** Right. That sort of what Alex talked about a little bit. And yeah, it may be interesting to talk about that as well because it seems like you are doing a lot more sort of "White Hat-ish" stuff compared to just using expired domains. But yeah, I think to be honest and upfront with everybody, which you are on your website, it only makes sense to talk about that too.



**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. So, what I talked about is initially what I do for any niche site and a lot of times that is all that I need to rank a site, but if I do need a little more, an extra kick, a little extra boost, I may go to using expired domains. As you said, you did an interview with Alex there. And you can use them directly where you – and when I say expired domains, essentially, there's a whole process you can go through to find domains that have expired perhaps even for a year or two.

I mean you can go buy them for \$9 because they have expired. And when you buy them, they'll come back because there are lots of existing links pointing to these old sites, that were sites. The PageRank on this may come back as a 3 or 4 once you have them alive again, up and running again.

So, the one tactic is to then put content on that expired domain and link to your niche site. But what I did on this particular project is I didn't use the expired domain to link directly to my site. What I did is I actually found a webmaster out there that is in the survival niche that wanted a link from my expired domain that had a PR, a PageRank of 4 pointing to his survival knife site or his survival site and sort of in exchange for doing that, he then link from his very authoritative survival site to my niche site, the [BestSurvivalKnifeGuide.com](http://BestSurvivalKnifeGuide.com).

**Pat Flynn:** That's interesting.

**Spencer Haws:** So, sort of a three-way linking. So, I was using this asset that I had to essentially generate a link to my niche site. And I did do that once. There's one link pointing to my site using that.

**Pat Flynn:** Do you think that helps? That one link?

**Spencer Haws:** It certainly didn't hurt. I think that it did help. I mean it's so hard to know which link caused the increase in rank. But yeah, I definitely think it helped because it's coming from this guy's site which is a very active, real blog community with great content and I got a great link from one of his pages, in content that absolutely, I think it helped.

**Pat Flynn:** OK, awesome. Is there any sort of takeaway the audience can have as far as that strategy is concerned or was that sort of just a – is that something you can duplicate again?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. I mean I think that you could duplicate that. You would have to go out and find people that would be interested in doing this so you'd need to contact individual webmasters and that can take some time to find related blogs and essentially pitch them on the idea. But definitely, people could go out there and do that and perhaps have it work for them as well.



**Pat Flynn:** Cool, very cool. Now, the last part of the puzzle before we finish up, and again, thank you so much for your time, Spencer, and all the knowledge, is monetization. And I remember back in the day, [Niche Pursuits](#) was all about using AdSense to generate an income. And it was going very well. Would you mind sharing sort of what happened and then sort of where you're at now and how you're monetizing your new sites?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, I can dig into that. It's a little more painful as you know but ...

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, I'm sorry.

**Spencer Haws:** No, but all is good now. So, it has a happy ending. But yeah, so my primary strategy was monetizing with Google AdSense. And the reason I did that is because there are so many keywords that you can monetize with Google AdSense that you can't monetize with other things quite as well. For example, I think your niche site, the security guard training site, is a perfect example.

**Pat Flynn:** Right.

**Spencer Haws:** You can make a lot of money with Google AdSense but you can't really make any money with Amazon Associates.

**Pat Flynn:** I think I made like six bucks in the last two years through Amazon Associates by links to like batons and stuff like that.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. And you've tried. You've tried other methods but Google AdSense just works well. And I think there's just thousands and thousands of niches that work so well with Google AdSense. And so, that's what I did. And it's easy. You build a site. You throw up Google AdSense and you're done.

Well, it seems like about a year ago, Google AdSense went through this rampage where they started closing all sort of accounts and my account was closed for whatever reason. I didn't get a good explanation, just a template email from Google AdSense. And at the time that my account got closed, I was making about \$10,000 a month from Google AdSense. So it hurt quite a bit.

And so anyways, to make a long story a little bit shorter, I went out and I found a way to get a new Google AdSense account essentially by creating a new business entity and getting AdSense account in that business entity's name. So I am still active and happy with Google AdSense and lots of my old existing sites. It's been a year since then. So I'm back up and running and those sites are earning just like they were before. I put my new account code on the old sites and everything is good.

But for this new niche site project, because I'm a little bit more protective now of my Google AdSense account, I didn't want it publicly out there. I decided to monetize my





survival knife site with Amazon Associates Program. And so, that's what I'm using for that. And it's actually going quite well with that. I actually think that Amazon is maybe even a better choice than AdSense would have been for this particular niche because people can go to Amazon, buy the physical product for themselves, and I get a kickback of 6% to 7% based on whatever they purchased.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah man, that's awesome. And how much money – how long did it take you to get to number one and how much money are you making from this site right now?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. I only know the exact number of days because I just wrote a blog post on it. But it took me 62 days to reach number one in Google which is pretty quick for people listening out there. I usually like to take 90 days before I really decide if I'm going to rank well. So, 62 days number one in Google. In the very first month, well, the first four months, so March, last month, I made I think \$87. And this month, I just have made a little bit more than \$300 from that niche site, about \$320 for the month of April. And my goal is to hit \$500 next month. So we'll see how it goes.

**Pat Flynn:** Nice man. And then again, once you get to a certain point, you'll probably just sort of let it be or have somebody else work on it for you while you create other ones. Is that right?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, yeah, that's essentially right. I am still producing content for it. I'm doing lots of individual knife reviews on the site. And it may reach a point where I've done 50 knife reviews, covered all the major knives out there that I let it sit for a while. But the additional content is helping a lot. I'm getting lots of great Long Tail traffic, search queries are coming from all types of keywords now not just my "best survival knife" keyword. And that's helping me obviously boost my bottom line.

So, as long as the income is increasing each month, I may just keep producing a little bit more content. But I do suspect that yeah, I'll have it more hands off in probably a couple of months where I just let it sit and hopefully stay up at the top of Google and earn money each month.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, that's so cool. Well done again. This question just popped to my head while you're talking. As far as the knife reviews, how are you writing those? Are you actually – like where are you getting the information to write those reviews?

**Spencer Haws:** Yes. So this is where I've actually involved somebody else because I'm not an expert on every knife. So I actually am having this survival expert that I hired off of Elance to do that research and writing of the articles for me for the most part.

**Pat Flynn:** Nice.



**Spencer Haws:** So, I'm paying him x number of dollars for each article to go and do that for me.

**Pat Flynn:** Can you give us a range on how much that article might be?

**Spencer Haws:** Sure, yeah. Between – most of them probably average about \$15 or about \$10 to \$20 an article.

**Pat Flynn:** OK, that's not bad.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah.

**Pat Flynn:** And especially if you can get up to 500 bucks a month then it's sort of just a self-perpetuating machine.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. And these are one-time investments, these articles. It's not something I'm paying for constantly. Once it's up there and I've paid for, it's this initial investment. And once the site breaks-even, if I can earn \$500 a month without really investing hardly anything every month, then it's quite profitable after that.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean when you think about other ways that people sort of generate a little bit of cash, stock market, or mutual funds or whatever, I mean this is just like – I feel like if you can do this well and even it just might take only one site, it could really help out your lifestyle even just another 100 bucks a month. You know what I'm saying?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, absolutely. And I mean the investment is really relatively small when you compare it to other types of businesses, brick and mortar businesses or really anything that people may want to get involved in. You might spend a couple hundred bucks to create a niche site, I maybe spent a little bit more, it's \$300 or \$400 or something that I've invested so far but I mean the return is huge on that. So for a relatively small investment and that's with me outsourcing almost everything. If you do everything yourself, the investment is much less. Yeah, you can have a really nice return.

**Pat Flynn:** Awesome, man. Awesome. Well thank you, Spencer, again so much for the information today and also for your tool, [Long Tail Pro](#). I know I keep mentioning that and it's not just because you're here on the show but it's actually a really good tool that I'm starting to use more and more now. Congratulations on all the success you've had with that. I remember you ran a promotion fairly recently and killed it. You did really well with that. So congrats.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. No, I appreciate that very much.



**Pat Flynn:** And for anyone out there looking for new keyword research tool, I've obviously used Market Samurai. I talked about that a lot. I've used that for years. But you might also want to look at Long Tail Pro as a good option for you. And we'll have links to all these things in the show notes.

Spencer, if people want to get a hold of you or ask you questions or see what else you got going on, where should they head?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. The best place is to head over to my blog over at [NichePursuits.com](http://NichePursuits.com). We really do have a great community over there, lots of people building niche sites, talking about how to rank in Google and do different things, very active over there. Come either read some of the content and read a comment or there is certainly a contact page there where people can get in touch with me via email right on NichePursuits.com. They can also follow me on Twitter@NichePursuits.

**Pat Flynn:** Awesome. So for those of you out there listening, if you'd enjoy the show and you appreciated Spencer sharing all these great information, hit him up on Twitter@NichePursuits. So again, thank you, Spencer. I appreciate it and I can't wait to see what you got going on in the near future. And we'll probably have you back on the show to see how we can start building sites in 2014.

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah. No, absolutely. It's been great being here and I look forward to your Niche Site Duel. I hope everything goes well. I think it's going to be a very exciting process.

**Pat Flynn:** It will be fun. It will be a fun experiment. And thank you for the inspiration to help me sort of get back into the niche site building process.

**Spencer Haws:** Absolutely. Anytime. I love doing it. It's been great. I mean it is what I do and then being able to finally sort of publicly reveal one of my domains. I've gotten great feedback so it's always great to hear that feedback. So I appreciate you for taking the time to interview me here, Pat.

**Pat Flynn:** Cool, man. If somebody wanted to go and just check out all those posts about your best survival knife website, where will they – is there an easy spot to go to on your site or a special link or something?

**Spencer Haws:** Yeah, if they can go to [NichePursuits.com/NicheSiteProject](http://NichePursuits.com/NicheSiteProject).

**Pat Flynn:** All one word link no spaces or dashes?

**Spencer Haws:** That's right.

**Pat Flynn:** OK. NicheSiteProject or NichePursuits.com/NicheSiteProject. Cool, man. Thanks again. I appreciate it.



**Spencer Haws:** Thank you very much. Thanks for your time.

**Pat Flynn:** All right. Thanks once again to Spencer for NichePursuits.com for revealing his strategies and sharing his site and exactly what he did to help it ranked. If you wanted to pick up [Long Tail Pro](#), which is Spencer's keyword research marketing software which I'm actually going to be using throughout the entire Niche Site Duel 2.0 process, you can head on over to [SmartPassiveIncome.com/LongTailPro](#).

That's the URL that will redirect you through my affiliate link which means I do earn a commission if you go through that link and make a purchase at no extra cost to you. If you do go through it again, that's [SmartPassiveIncome.com/LongTailPro](#). Just thank you so much and let me know that you went through it so I can thank you in person or in email.

And of course, if you have any questions about that product, please let me know. You can also get that link and other resources mentioned in today's session in the show notes at as always, [SmartPassiveIncome.com/session66](#). So again, the show notes at [SmartPassiveIncome.com/session66](#).

All right. Before I finish up today, I wanted to do something new which I'm going to be doing in a lot of the future episodes here. I'm going to be playing a voicemail that I get from somebody who is listening to the show who has a question or comment and I'm going to play it for you and then I'm going to answer the question or respond. And if you want to leave your voicemail, you can go to [SpeakPipe.com/PatFlynn](#) and you'll have a chance to go on the show. If you leave me a voicemail, make sure you mention whatever site that you have, a little bit of free publicity there if you have a good question.

And here's the first question from Erin.

**Aarin:** Hey, Pat. My name is Aarin and I'm the owner and editor-in-chief of a magazine called [Paint Crush Magazine](#). It's a nail polish magazine and it is a – for all intents and purposes, a beauty blog. My question is about podcasting. How do you podcast for a medium that is primarily a visual medium? So there's beauty bloggers all over YouTube and that's because they're giving makeup tutorials, and nail polish tutorials, et cetera, and fashion as well.

But how do you – how does that translate to a listening medium where it's just – like what ideas would you have to be able to do this because I don't see hardly any new podcast in the beauty and fashion industry at all on iTunes. And so, I realized that if I could be one of the first people to kind of ride this wave, then I would have a huge audience. But I'm not sure how to do that. If you could help out, that would be great. Thank you so much. Bye.



**Pat Flynn:** Thank you for the question, Aarin. That's actually a very common question I get from a lot of people because a lot of people are interested doing a podcast but they are in an industry like yours where it's primarily visual. When you think about it, it's not just beauty but there are designers, architects, and people doing photography and things like that. So the question is, how does a podcast make sense for these types of industries or does it even make sense?

And my answer is absolutely yes. Podcasting would make sense although it may not seem like it first for these visual industries. For one, like you said, it's probably relatively little competition just because it's not so obvious to create a podcast. And of course, if people are interested about a particular topic, they're going to want to consume information about it as much as they can. And if they have the option to do that with audio, they will especially when they're on the go and they don't have access to a computer. They're at the gym or on a walk or whatever.

But again, what kinds of things would you podcast about? So for a lot of these visual industries who do have podcast, there's a few photography ones out there and things like that, they talk about things like the business of x or the organization regarding x. A lot of them also include interviews with a lot of the top people in the industry or CEOs or marketing people from these big companies talking about maybe the history of the company and even some insider info and news about what's playing for the future.

Also, what's really good is including any sort of stories about that particular topic. Those are always good and fun to share and are great for audio. So for you for example, again, your website is [PaintCrushMagazine.com](http://PaintCrushMagazine.com), I believe. And on your site, you have a lot of great-looking tutorials. And if I did my nails, I'd totally use your site to help out. But check this out.

What if for example, you interview people who work for these companies you are promoting or talking about in your tutorials? MAC, or Dior or whatever? As a reader, I would see that and I'll be like, "Wow! That's so cool that you actually hook up with these companies and you talk to them." And it would really skyrocket your authority in the industry, I feel. Like you have these connections that no one else who is also doing tutorials may have. And you can ask them questions about the company, any sort of new things that might be on the horizon, or maybe what the most popular items are and hear it directly from the company. That would be so interesting. And you don't really need the visuals for that kind of stuff.

In fact, not having the visuals would actually help you because you can say that there are visuals or videos or any sort of images that go along with them on your site which would force people back on to your blog from the audio like in your show notes to check out whatever those things that you mentioned on the show maybe. But again, focusing on the stories or news, what just came up, where can they get it, or things like that, interviews, how about, what should be going through my head when I walk into a





Sephora. Yeah, I know what the stores are. And stuff about the mindset that is involved with your particular industry.

Again, it would work more in tandem with your website as opposed to just on its own. It would help you reach out to new audiences and help drive traffic back to your sort of visually-appealing site even though the podcast is just the audio. It will take some getting creative and thinking out of the box but things like that can help. And if you don't think you could speak too long about a topic, for like 30 minutes or whatever, there are a lot of successful podcasts out there that are less than 10 minutes long but they come out each week consistently and they do very well.

I apologize for those of you listening, if you hear some baby noises in the background, it's my daughter. But anyway, so hopefully those are some things that can help you, Aarin. Think about it. Thank you for the voicemail and if you're listening to this and you'd like to ask a question that I can potentially answer for you on the show, head on over to [SpeakPipe.com/PatFlynn](http://SpeakPipe.com/PatFlynn) and you can leave me a voicemail there.

Now to finish up, I want to talk about what's going to be coming out in the next episode, episode 67 of The Smart Passive Income Podcast. I'm really excited to welcome Neil Patel from QuickSprout.com to talk more about SEO. And I got to tell you, he is probably the most requested guest I had when I asked my audience, who should I be interviewing and who has can't miss content. It was Neil Patel from QuickSprout.com.

So, he's going to be on the show. And I can tell you, it's just incredible, the amount of information and the kind of information he's giving. He's on a whole new level. I mean he's helping companies that are making millions make even more millions of dollars and get millions of traffic or users to their website. So, he's going to be there helping us, the little guys, and that episode is actually going to come out two days after this one goes live.

So, if you're listening to this in real-time or as it comes out, it's going to be this coming Friday. Yeah, she's excited for Neil too. And if you are listening to this in the future, well then, that doesn't matter. So until then, until episode 67, I hope you are as excited as I am, head on over to [SmartPassiveIncome.com](http://SmartPassiveIncome.com). Sign up for the newsletter and get ready for some awesome things to come. Thanks again everybody. Cheers. And all the best.

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