



## **SPI Podcast Session #151 - How to Put on a Successful (and Profitable) Virtual Conference with Lain Ehmann**

Show notes: [www.smartpassiveincome.com/session151](http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session151)

This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session #151.

**Intro:** Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast, where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now your host, who can sing every song sung on Saved by the Bell, Pat Flynn!

**Pat:** What's up everybody? Pat Flynn here and welcome to Session 151 of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Thank you for taking time out of your day to hang out with me. This is so cool and I just want to thank you all up front really quick, because we are at Episode 151.

We had amazing first 150 shows and I cannot wait for the next 150, which starts with this one with a great friend, Lain Ehmann, whose name you might recognize if you've listened to the podcast before, because she was featured in Episode 37, so quite a long time ago, and she's done a lot since.

Just to refresh your memory, you might have heard me talk about a success story from somebody who was making six figures in the scrapbooking industry. That's Lain, and she still is doing such. She's helping herself do that by doing virtual conferences. She's putting on very, very successful and very profitable virtual conferences, so that's what today's episode is all about.

I think for a lot of you who are listening to this, this might be your "aha" moment. This might be the light bulb going off in your head. Maybe you have an audience already and you've been serving them as much as you can or have the ability to right now, but then there's this virtual conference thing. You're going to hear what it's all about, what the pros are and what the cons are, and there are lots of pros for sure.

Actually, coming up next month on April 24, me and Chris Ducker are putting on a virtual conference. It's sort of like a hybrid virtual conference, but live conference. The live conference is being streamed online and there will be interaction and things like that, so if you want to check that out you can go to [1DayBB.com/live](http://1DayBB.com/live) to check out what me and Chris have to offer you there for April 24.



Let's get to this episode with Lain. It's incredible. There's so much information, just like she brought last time. We're going to hear all about how to put on a virtual conference. Here she is.

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**Pat:** What's up, SPI community? I'm so excited to bring back somebody who I've referenced probably more than anybody on the SPI blog and podcast. This is Lain Ehmann. You might have heard her in [Episode 37](#) of the Smart Passive Income podcast.

Lain, welcome back to the show. Thank you for coming on.

**Lain:** Thank you! I'm so excited to be here.

**Pat:** We posted that episode together of us in Episode 37 in April of 2012, and it's currently January 2015, so nearly three years later. I'm sure a lot has happened since then. I know a lot has happened since, because we have emailed each other and I wanted to bring you back on to talk about some of those things. So why don't you get us all up-to-date from where we left off.

**Lain:** Sure. In that episode we talked a lot about my niche business. My primary business at that point was in scrapbooking, around teaching online classes and running virtual events. At that point I think my business had been around for about two years or so, so now I'm well into my 5<sup>th</sup> year. I guess I would say at that point I was about three, and now I'm at about six years in business.

**Pat:** Right, and before we go on I just have to thank you for that episode because it's so inspiring to a lot of people. A lot of people say to themselves before getting into some type of online business, "Oh, you know what, I don't know what I could do. I have these hobbies, but I just don't think it's possible."

I'm like, "Check out Episode 37, Lain Ehmann, six figures, scrapbooking. Need I say more? No." Then they listen to it and they love it, so if you haven't listened to that episode, listen to Lain in that one. But let's hear what's happened since then.

**Lain:** The scrapbooking portion of my business is still chugging away, still a lot of fun, still a lot of stuff to talk about with scrapbooking. The industry as a whole has changed a lot. A lot of our magazines have gone away. We have more people doing



scrapbooking in different manners like photo books and preferring to keep it all online. We have blogs and things like that. Because my model was really not based on any particular type of scrapbooking, I've really been able to evolve with the industry, so the scrapbooking stuff is doing great.

Over the last year or so I've rolled out a new portion of my personal passions, and that's in the area of productivity and mindset coaching. I would get all these questions from people, just like you do, like "How'd you do that? How do you get this done?" Especially with having three kids and running a business and all that, "How do you balance it all? How do you do it all?"

I really started diving into that, so that's something that I've been developing over the last six months or so and it's been a lot of fun. It's fun to take that message that I talk about in scrapbooking, in terms of things not having to be perfect, just get it on the page, and taking that same philosophy to a different audience, so it's really been a lot of fun and I've really enjoyed it.

**Pat:** I love that, the journey that you've gone through. Congratulations to you on this new path, although it's not like you've left the old one but you've just started a new one, which is really cool.

The old website that you talked about in that episode was [LayoutADay.com](http://LayoutADay.com). Is that still the best one to get information?

**Lain:** It's still where everything is, [LayoutADay.com](http://LayoutADay.com).

**Pat:** And then your new one about productivity?

**Lain:** That's at [LainEhmann.com](http://LainEhmann.com). People might want to go to the show notes for that because it's kind of hard to spell.

**Pat:** We'll give them the link to the show notes at the end of this episode. For those of you listening, what is this episode about? This episode is going to be about how to put on a virtual event.

Lain, you've done a number of these, and I think a lot of you out there know that you might have an audience that an event would be perfect for, but you're maybe too scared to do an in-person event, or maybe you want to work up toward it. A virtual



event is a great way to go, and actually it could even be more profitable for you because you don't have to have people fly in and do all this stuff.

Chris Ducker and I are doing a live in-person/online event on April 24, so I'm really interested in this information too. We want to put on a good event for people watching in-studio with us in person, and also those watching online.

Tell us about your first experience getting into putting on a virtual event. What gave you the idea to do that, and how did you go about putting that on?

**Lain:** Sure. First let me define what I mean when I'm talking about virtual events, just to distinguish them in people's minds from other things out there. You and I have talked in the past about webinars, kind of these standalone 1- to 2-hour events that could be termed virtual events. I was thinking more that today we would be talking about these larger-scale events, more like conferences. Was that kind of the angle you wanted me to take today?

**Pat:** Absolutely, yes, and thank you for defining that. A webinar could be seen as an online event, and I've called them that before for things like Let Go Day and other things, but you want to think about this as a bigger event – conferences, potentially having guest speakers come in and that sort of thing.

**Lain:** Exactly. That's exactly the way I describe it. It's like a conference that I produce online. It typically can span anywhere from 5-6 hours to 2 days, the ones that I do. It conceivably could be much longer than that, but I have found that to be kind of the sweet spot for me, with the preference towards 1 day.

For my virtual events it's like Lollapalooza or Jingle Ball or something like that, where I'm bringing in a lot of different "performers" and having them perform on my stage, so I describe it like I'm the Bill Graham Presents. It's Lain Ehmann Presents, where I'm working with the talent and arranging the schedule and setting up the infrastructure so those instructors or speakers need to just come in, show up, do their thing, and they don't have to worry about anything else.

By the same token, the attendee doesn't have to worry about anything else. They know what they're going to get beforehand. Working between those two critical parties or critical stakeholders or shareholders is really where I see my job, making sure both of them have a fantastic time and achieve their personal goals.



That's what differs, I think, between producing an event and being at an event. You and I have both been at New Media Expo, where we show up and they tell us what room to go to, they give us our badge, we show up, the microphone's there, and it's all set up for us. We don't really think about who had to do that, what time did they have to get there, did the sound system work, all that kind of thing.

When you produce an event, you're the fairy behind the scenes who's flying around like Tinkerbell, making sure all the magic dust is where it needs to be so the whole thing goes off correctly. When you do it well, it is magic, it really is. You can create this event online and people feel like they know you. They feel like they know the instructors. They feel like they know each other, and it can be as fulfilling, if not more so, than going to a live event.

There's a lot of reasons for that, so let's talk a little bit about why you might want to do a virtual event versus an in-person event. You spoke a little bit about that in terms of the risk factor with having to reserve a hotel.

I've been working with a hotel locally here in Scottsdale about an event I want to put on this summer for my scrapbooking crowd, and they require a huge deposit. They want to know they're going to sell X number of rooms and we're going to spend \$X on food and beverage, and I am on the line for that if it doesn't work out. We're talking to the tune of \$10,000 to \$15,000 and we're only working with maybe 40 people.

If you want to put on an event for hundreds of people, you can just imagine and scale that up from there. It is not an inexpensive proposition, and you can lose a significant amount of money if there's an airline strike or there's some kind of other world event, snow, people don't show up, those rooms don't get used. Your credit card, as the producer, is on the bill for that.

**Pat:** So you're putting on an event for about 40 people and it's costing about \$15,000 to reserve that space?

**Lain:** Yeah, and I'm actually negotiating with some other people and looking at some other things because I don't want to do that. I'm not at the point in my business where that is an insignificant amount of money, and we haven't done it enough for me to be able to be 100% certain that I can pull in those people. There are always those unknowns.



With the virtual events, you're talking about holding it online in a virtual room. Those can be free, if you go with something like one of the free trials on one of the webinar platforms. I use a really high-powered one. It's Cisco's [Webex Event Center](#) that can hold 500 or more people in it, and that is several hundred dollars a month that I pay. But compare \$300 to \$15,000 and you can see exactly right there that there's a huge benefit.

Then there comes in the issue of travel. In my market in particular, I have a lot of women, a lot of moms, and it's difficult for them to get away. I've found overall, no matter what market you're in, people don't necessarily want to travel if they can get the same experience without having to get on a plane, and without having to stay in a hotel room. It just lowers the barrier to entry and it cuts their costs down, so that's significant as well.

Another thing is bringing in international audiences. I routinely have people from Asia and New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Hawaii, Alaska, Europe, not to mention North America, all in our room at the same time. The time zone is a little bit of an issue, but it's nothing compared to asking somebody to fly from Australia up to America for a weekend event, so you pull a wider range of people in. That's really exciting as well, to get that worldwide international experience.

So we've got the cost side of things. We don't have to worry about coffee, is the room too cold or is the room too hot. We don't have to worry about how many hotel rooms, eating, and wifi connections at \$15-50 a person. It gets insane. The numbers can really go up very, very fast, so cost is obviously a huge issue. It's more appealing to people because they don't have to travel.

Also you can pull in a huge range of instructors. On some of my events I've had as many as 15 instructors. The smaller events might have 5-6, but I'm able to pull in these instructors again from Australia and from Canada and from Europe, who might not be able to travel, or I might not be able to afford to pay them to show up at an event.

It takes up an hour to two hours of their time versus asking them to invest a whole weekend or more, if they're coming from further away. That is huge, because I can honestly say when I'm promoting my events, "You have never seen these people together before."

Oftentimes when you go to live events, sometimes it's kind of the same usual suspects. We see a lot of the same names and that kind of thing. You can really create a unique



event, and that is spectacular as well, to pull in instructors that people might not have heard, or might not have heard together. That allows you to present something unique, so that's really wonderful too.

**Pat:** I'm keeping notes here on certain questions about these certain things.

**Lain:** Why don't we pause there and you ask some questions.

**Pat:** Let's say on guests right now. I think it's really cool that you can get anybody in the world to come in, if they're available of course, just for those short periods of time when they might have to be presenting and stuff. How do you reach out to those people? I think a lot of them might expect to get paid for their time. Do you pay them for their time? How does that sort of deal work out?

**Lain:** I do pay my instructors. I think that's really critical, not only to get quality instructors but also I feel better about the event, just because I think they're professionals and they deserve to be paid for that.

For the scrapbooking events that I do, I've worked with companies before, like manufacturers who become sponsors of the events and then there's a different arrangement. But if I'm working with an individual instructor – "So Pat Flynn's going to show up at our next scrapbooking event and he's going to be teaching us how to add audio to our scrapbooks with these cool recorders that he's invented somehow" –

**Pat:** Or macrame. I can do macrame.

**Lain:** "He's going to be teaching macrame on scrapbooking pages!" If you're showing up as an individual, you become an affiliate for the event. You promote the event to your audience and then I have kind of the standard affiliate share, where every ticket you sell through your link you get a share of.

Some of my instructors are newer so they may not have an audience yet, and I give them the option of getting a flat fee instead of the affiliate commission. They're still required by the contract that I have, the agreement I have with them, to promote because that's critical, but I do give them the option of being able to just take a flat fee. Then it's work for hire and I purchase their content from them.

That lets me get some really new faces who might say, "You know what, I don't think more than 5 people read my blog, but I would love to do this for you, Lain, and I've got



some great stuff to teach." It lets me discover people, and you'll see people who you might not have seen elsewhere. Again it's really exciting when I can share those instructors with people.

**Pat:** That's really cool. Do you have any tips for anybody looking to just find help in coordinating with these guys? Do you use specific tools or apps to organize that? Do you have any tips on perhaps the order of your guests to make sure people leave with excitement? Do you pay attention to where people are in your program?

**Lain:** I don't pay attention to where they are in the program as much as I pay attention to the content. When I invite them I give them an initial invitation via email, or if it's somebody that I know more casually in terms of we've got a friendship, then the invitation wouldn't be as formal.

I'd just say, "Hey, you may have heard about these events I produce. We've been doing them for this many years. I've worked with instructors like yada yada yada" and name drop some people so they will know that I'm legit. "I'm planning our next event for..." –

October is our big broad scrapbooking event, the biggest one in terms of content that we have. "I would love to talk with you about this and see if you might be interested in teaching. It typically requires this, this, and this in terms of requirements. Let me know what you think, and I'd love to give you more info." I'll send that out, and I pretty much have 100% response yes or no on that. Very rarely do I not get a response.

I'll either get a response that says, "This sounds great. Send me more info," or "I'm sorry, I just can't do it that weekend or I'm working with a company that requires me to be exclusive to them. I can't teach for anybody else right now." But I typically do get responses, almost 100% of the time I would say.

**Pat:** Nice. Thank you for that. In terms of the events you put on, you said you do like a 2-day event. How many guest speakers would you have for about a 2-day event?

**Lain:** I've actually moved down to 1-day events only because I've found that people prefer them. It lowers the cost point for the attendee and it requires less of a time commitment, so all my events now are 1-day and they might range from 5-8 instructors.





A 2-day event would be anywhere up to 15 to 16. Each instructor has a 1-hour time slot, so that's kind of how I gauge the time. 15 instructors would be 15 hours of class time.

**Pat:** Perfect. Then how soon in advance of the event are you contacting these guests?

**Lain:** I've started contacting people for the October event. I started lining up some of the people I knew I wanted to return as soon as last October's was over, so I have a couple people already on the hook. Sometimes I'll ask them in front of the audience if it's somebody I know I want to have come back.

I'll say, "Hey, did you guys love this? Wouldn't you love to have Pat come back and teach us more advanced macrame next year?" and everybody says, "Yes!" and then I will immediately follow up and say, "I've got you down." They of course could still turn me down, but hey, you've got 300 or 400 people in the room saying, "Please come back. We want more!" How do you say no to that?

The people who are newer, I'm starting basically now for October. Again, with travel you might have to book people a year or further in advance. Because this is online I won't have a finalized schedule till probably April or May, but it will be a good 4-6 months beforehand, and that's built out over time.

The first time I did this I did not have that much lead time. It was more like, "I think I'll do this in a couple months. Let's put on a show!" People who are thinking about doing this for the first time should not feel like, "Well, it's already too late. I'm already off game because I haven't started." You can pull it together more quickly online.

**Pat:** I think me and Chris, for our event happening in April, we gave ourselves about 6-7 months. We thought that was plenty, but it is plenty fast as far as the time is going by. We're on top of it, but we're feeling it too. We're really excited about that, and you can get more information about that at [1DayBB.com](http://1DayBB.com).

A couple other questions about that. If somebody's really interested in this, which you probably are by now, what are the first steps? Is the first step to get guests, or is there something that happens before that in terms of structuring your day and what it might be like?

**Lain:** I think the first step is to decide on what's missing in your industry. What does your market need that it's not getting? For the scrapbooking market for me, there used



to be a ton of local scrapbook stores. There used to be tons of opportunities to hear teachers teach. They would travel around the country and there were a lot of scrapbooking events.

Those are going away. The scrapbook stores are going away, the magazines are going away, and people don't have that place to connect and to see these scrapbookers that they may have previously learned from in magazines or in other formats.

So I wanted to produce something that would bring together the best of online education with the best of in-person education to provide that community, that connection between student and student, and between student and teacher. That's what I was going after, that experience.

For another market it might be completely different, if you're in a niche where let's say there hasn't really been any standardized education, it's a fairly new thing, like the food truck industry. I bet there's not a ton of food truck conferences out there, and if somebody is running a food truck they may have a hard time getting away. That would be perfect for a virtual event.

**Pat:** It is something we've actually talked about internally. There's one main conference and then a few sort of satellite conferences around that, but nothing online, that's for sure.

**Lain:** Yeah, so that's what you need to decide. "What can I do that's going to add to my industry's overall development? What's going to be different?" I never want to do something that's like an also-ran or a me-too. I'm always trying to come up with the next thing that's new for people. That's just my role.

Even if you want to do something in an industry where there are a lot of online events, what can you do that's going to be different? That's where I think people should start.

**Pat:** Love it, great. We're talking about a lot of great stuff here. You mentioned people to people, so student to student, student to teacher, and the interaction. I think that's one of the best things about going to an event in person, is you get to see them. You get to shake their hand and hug them at cocktail hour, and some people get really crazy with that, but that I feel is something that's missing in the online virtual event space. How do you truly get that interaction in a virtual room?



**Lain:** It can be missing, and this is one of the reasons why I opt for the super-duper extra-stratosphere-powered Event Center with Webex. They also have a Meeting Center or something. I can't remember the name of it, but they do have a lower-functionality room at a lower price tag. For me, I needed the Event Center because of the number of people I have.

It allows the chat in the room, and not audio chat but it's got a chat box, and that chat will go so fast. To give you an idea on the size of my events, on our webinars that we have – we call them scrapinars – once a month we host a free 1-hour scrapinar. We might have 2,000 people register and close to 500 people show up. Usually it's about 25% who show up live.

For the paid events we could have anywhere up to about 500-ish people register, and we'll have 200-300 who are in the room at any given time, and a good number of them are chatting with each other.

The instruction is going on on one part of the screen, and they're in the room talking about, "I've been looking for that punch" or "You're in Alaska? I'm in Alaska too. Where's our closest Michael's?" There's just tons of chat going on and they love that. There are some web rooms that do not provide for that chat, but that is critical for my audience.

Another thing is that we host what we call the pre-event PJ party. It's the night before, when the instructors all show up to do their mic sound checks. We have like a 2-hour open session where all the attendees can come in too and just get used to the room. We usually have some prizes. We'll do a little bit of "getting to know you, where are you," just chatting.

**Pat:** Wow, that's really cool. I love that idea.

**Lain:** It is so fun because a lot of these people have been dying to connect with other scrapbookers, and they haven't been able to because either the area they live in is not realistic for them, or maybe they're shy. They might go to a scrapbook store or go to a class somewhere, but it's not as free and open.

You know how open people feel when they're behind their keyboard, but open in a good way, where they feel like they can make a comment and feel like they're on even ground with everybody else.



We also do a Facebook event page beforehand so people can register and say that they're coming, then meet other people beforehand that way. We just try to look at little things like that to make those connections between people.

There's a couple other things we do that are kind of specific to our industry, like creating a Flickr gallery so people can share their products afterwards and show what they've been doing, and what they did with the content they learned, things like that.

**Pat:** Love it. This is golden information, by the way, and thank you so much. This is actually helping out me and Chris so much.

**Lain:** My pleasure, I love it.

**Pat:** I'm going to have him listen to this audio even before it goes live because we're right in the middle of planning. This is so cool. You mentioned tickets a couple times. What technology are you using to serve those tickets?

**Lain:** I know that GoToWebinar has an integration that will pull in your email list, and there's a lot of different functions that GoToWebinar has that I'm not using currently. I just set up a registration page, it's operating through PayPal, then they get subscribed to an email list, and then I stay in contact with them via an Aweber email list. That's where I send them all their information.

We create what we call a Call Guide. It's one of those things that we've been calling it the same thing for three or four years, so now the name's stuck. Basically it's the program. We have a written PDF document that has all the classes, class descriptions, the link to where they'll go, the schedule of the day, what they can do if they have problems accessing the web room, and all that information is in what we call the Call Guide. It's more like a program.

We send that out beforehand so people can print that out if they want, or just have it on their computer, but we communicate with them through email, through an email list.

**Pat:** Perfect. Thank you. In terms of ticket price, how do you best determine the price for a virtual event, which probably has a lot more upside because you're not paying so much for a venue and all that stuff. But can you have too much of an upside? How do you determine what that perfect price is so you get the maximum amount of sales and also profit?



**Lain:** A lot of it is going to be experimentation, just like pricing. When it's virtual there's a lot more of a spread, a lot more of a spectrum that you'll see. At this point, having done a dozen of these over the last three or four years, I've got a pretty good idea of what my hard costs are.

I know my monthly cost for the web room. I know what my payment processing costs are. I know what my VA is costing me. I know what kind of support I'm going to need, and this is critical.

This is a sidebar here, but this one's big. I'm going to write it down as a tip also because I'm sure at the end you'll ask me, "Anything else?" It's having staff in the room to help you out, just some kind of customer support person who can help you out.

I know what all those costs are so I know what I need to make on the event to cover all that, but when I first started there was a lot of experimentation. I didn't know what people would be willing to pay, and this was new. I always kind of position it when I'm doing something like that as, "Hey, you get to get in on the ground floor! I'm charging way below what I know this is worth, because I know it's a risk for you."

We've got an event coming up at the end of January, and the on-the-page retail rate or whatever is \$149 for 7 instructors, but we offer that as low as \$59 if we can get people in in December to sign up for that. They were saving like \$90 off the registration rate just to get those early people in, because it was a brand new event.

We've done events like it before, but it was a new topic within the larger scrapbooking arena, and we weren't sure how it was going to play with people. We wanted to get a good base of people in to cover those hard costs, and then we've charged more since then.

For the big event in October the ticket price or registration price, whatever you want to say, will be about \$199, and then there will be specials running before the event, depending on how soon beforehand people sign up.

Sometimes instead of dollars off we'll do a bonus, like "You buy this and you'll get this for free," limited time offers, getting people to commit earlier, just because we want to know we're going to have X number of people. We can't really sell out, so we just want to cover those costs, and then everything else beyond that is going to be profit.



**Pat:** So you said \$199, and you were saying that sometimes you'll get 500 people registered, so you guys do the math on that. That's pretty much six figures for one event with only 500 people. That's not that impossible.

**Lain:** No, it isn't, especially if the instructors you've chosen are good promoters, and that's always a mixed bag too. Sometimes I weigh the person with great content and a small reach versus the person who's got a great reach but maybe people have seen a lot of them. They're all great instructors. I would never ask anybody who wasn't, but maybe they've been seen a lot of other places.

**Pat:** That's awesome. I think this is going to be very, very motivating for a lot of people. Now, in terms of promoting and marketing the event, you had mentioned having some of your speakers help to promote, or all of them, which I think is really smart. What else are you doing to help promote and market this event? To start this off, how soon before the event are you actually promoting?

**Lain:** Right now we have an event at the end of March, and just today – and I should have done this a week or two ago, but it got done today before the middle of the month, so I'm counting it as early January, which was my goal – I've created the interest list.

I'm creating a list where I can start talking about the event and say, "Hey, if you're interested in this, sign up here because we're going to give you a special deal. You'll be the first people who get to get in, and we'll release all the classes and topics and everything as soon as it's available. You guys will be the first to know." So I created that today and I will start announcing it.

Yesterday I emailed the people who had attended this event the last two years and told them to save the date, so I'm starting now promoting for the end of March, just because in December you can't really promote much for the coming year.

Ideally it would be about three months, just telling people "Hey, this is coming" and starting to talk about it, but with December we pushed that into January. For the October event we'll start hard in August probably, so 2-1/2 months I would say.

Again, it doesn't have to be the same as if people were trying to get a good flight or get a hotel room. People going to SxSW probably have their plans firmed up a year and a half in advance.



**Pat:** Right. So then after the interest list, how do you promote? I know obviously scarcity is huge in online marketing, but with a virtual event it's not quite as easy. It sounds like you already kind of answered this. Do you do price increases over time, leading up to the event? Can you give us a little bit of a structure on how that works?

**Lain:** Sure. Again, this is going to depend on your market. Something I should say on pricing too is being able to justify whatever your price is against a competitor or against the next most likely trade-off. I position mine against a live event.

I say, "You know what? You don't have to fly anywhere. You don't have to get a hotel room. You don't have to buy food. You don't have to get a babysitter. You're saving in all these places, and if you took a class from each of these instructors, it would easily be \$30 or \$40 each," so for a 7-person event I'm positioning myself against what would have cost \$280-300, not counting the flight and all these other things. When you do that, then \$99 or \$150 is a bargain.

Also I record everything so people get access to all the recordings as part of their registration package. You go to a live event and it's in one ear, maybe you capture some of it, but it's out the other. Maybe you get an opportunity to buy the recordings for an added fee, but this is all-in-one. You can go back and watch this over and over again as many times as you would like. I really have it positioned well that they're getting these benefits at a lower cost, so then it seems very reasonable.

**Pat:** I love the idea of the recordings. I've been a part of conferences before where they sold those in addition, and I've also been a part of conferences as an attendee of ones that just give it to me. I love being able to go back and re-watch something or, knowing that I perhaps missed something, I can go back and get that later.

It just makes me feel better even during a whole-day event knowing that I can miss something and will be able to get it later. If that's included, that's huge value-add right there.

**Lain:** Oh yeah. And as a consumer I hate being nickled and dimed. Pay for parking, pay for this. I would rather have it all built-in and feel like once I pay I'm done, so I love that.

We were talking about promotion, so the instructors will promote and I will create a whole swipe file for them. I'll create a Resource Guide or whatever, where I'll give them



sample blog posts, I'll give them sample Facebook status updates, I'll give them sample tweets and say, "Just stick your affiliate code in here."

I also will send that out to my affiliates as well and say, "Here. This is going on. This is what we're doing and this is content for you to use to promote," so we'll do that.

For our last event in October I also did a series of chats on [Spreecast](#). If people aren't familiar with that, it's basically like a Google Hangout, but a little more secure and structured, I guess you could say, and it's free for people to attend. They just need a Facebook login, and I would just do informal chats.

I would just say, "Hey, tell us about your class coming up. Tell us about the coolest thing that you have discovered about scrapbooking in the last year," just informal talks, content that might not be covered in their class but lets people get to know them. That was a lot of fun.

Then also last time we did an experiment. We did a Kindle book where I had each instructor write a little bit, just answering a series of questions about their class and about their scrapbooking style. This could easily translate over to any industry. It's like the questions, "Best business tip. If you had to start over with no money, what would you do?" It could be anything like that for any industry.

Then I just compiled them and we gave it away for a significant period of time in Kindle, and then it became like a \$.99 or \$1.99 ebook or something like that. That was different. That was something people hadn't seen in our industry before, so it got some interest there.

**Pat:** That's cool. In terms of your affiliates, what percentage of the ticket sales would you say come from affiliates?

**Lain:** Counting the instructors, I would say 75% maybe, so it's a good number, but there's also a significant number that are coming from me directly. It's going to depend on the event. This new event we're doing in January, I probably have a higher portion direct to me, but I would say it's well over half.

**Pat:** Then what program or programs are you using to help manage that, because I know that's a big question that a lot of people are going to have.





**Lain:** I'm in the middle of transitioning, but right now I'm using [E-Junkie](#), which is great because it's very inexpensive for my end. My affiliates tell me it's not as easy for them to use so I'm looking at some other options now, because I would like to make it easier for them.

**Pat:** I can attest to that on both sides as well, because I've used E-Junkie for a while and now I'm getting familiar with [Gumroad](#), and I know there's some other affiliate-specific programs you can use, some that are specific for WordPress.

Maybe in the future once you land on one that's good you can come back and I can just insert that in the show notes. There's something for everybody, and you can find one that works for you.

**Lain:** Yes, that would be great.

**Pat:** Chris and I are using [Eventbrite](#) to manage our program, and there are fees involved with that, but a lot of things are taken care of. You can have your affiliate program too. You can check out an Eventbrite page at [1DayBB.com/live](http://1DayBB.com/live). Have you used Eventbrite before or something like it?

**Lain:** I haven't and that's something I've been considering just because it handles certain tasks that then I wouldn't have to. My concern with it is that my scrapbooking audience isn't always on the forefront of technology, compared to internet marketers or online business owners.

If I'm already asking them to try this web room thing, I didn't want to put up too many barriers to entry, but I think Eventbrite is getting to the point now where it is more widespread, so people are comfortable with it. I just didn't want people not coming because there were too many technological hoops for them to jump through.

**Pat:** I'm really glad you said that that was the case for your audience. You should absolutely always know who your audience is and what kind of people they are and what they respond to as well, so that's really smart.

My final question here, unless you have anything else to add afterwards, Lain. This has just been amazing, and thank you again for sharing all this. Some people are going to build businesses in the next year using your model, and this is just going to change their lives. This is just so great, so thank you again.



What are the biggest mistakes that people will make, so if they know, they can avoid them?

**Lain:** There's always going to be a technological glitch, either on the payment side, or your WordPress blog goes down the day you open up registration, or your email list disappears. There's always going to be something that goes wrong.

I remember the first event I did, and it was in April 2011, the first big one like this. I remember – and I'm not a cryer at all – but I was in tears because of the web room. I wasn't using Webex at that time. I was using this web room where they had sold me on these capabilities that didn't exist.

They said, "Oh yeah, we can handle..." and I was having people try to login and they were getting bumped back out, and it was horrible. It was horrible, and I didn't have a Plan B because it was the first one I'd done.

So just expect things to go wrong and expect to have a Plan B and a Plan C and a Plan D. At this point I always have 47 different ways to get the information out, to contact my audience, to run the event. I've always got a back-up for basically everything.

Just like if I were hosting this at the Hyatt, I'm there to solve those problems and I remind myself – this is one of those mantras – that I get paid for those hard times. The times when everything's going easy, I'm working for free. The time I'm earning my money is the time when everything's exploding and I have to problem-solve and have a calm head. That has helped me a lot over time.

**Pat:** Thank you for that. That's going to help me and Chris, too, and everybody else on here listening, so thank you for that Lain. Did we miss anything big?

**Lain:** I wanted to mention just two things. One is having staff in the room actively with you helping you out, because you're going to need links to certain things. You're going to mention something that you had no idea you were going to mention.

Maybe it's one of your products or something you're an affiliate for, and you don't want to have to be the one digging up that link. So have a VA or some kind of assistant or a friend who's there to help out with that kind of stuff. That's #1.

#2 is I used to teach at the events, as well as produce them. Now I almost exclusively am the host, and that's how I see my role, as the Mistress of Ceremonies. I'm greeting



the people as they come in the room, and I'm welcoming the instructor, again playing that role between the instructor and the attendee, and making sure everybody's okay.

It's just like walking around freshening their drinks and things like that. I really take that role very seriously, and again, that's my value-add. People will tell me, "Oh my gosh, you just made it so comfortable and so fun. I felt so welcome," both on the instructor side and the student side. They feel confident even if something goes wrong because they know I'm there to handle it.

I'll tell them that up-front. I'll say, "You know what, we can't control technology. When it works it's great, we love it. If something goes wrong, trust me. We will make it right," and people believe that because I've shown it to them over and over, and they see my face. I'm a consistent presence throughout the whole event.

To me it was too much to try to teach and do that role at the same time, so I chose to take that role of the producer or the host instead.

**Pat:** Love it. That's a perfect way to end this, Lain. Thank you so much for all of your help and information. You said there were two things. Did we cover those two things?

**Lain:** Yes, just the staff, having somebody there to help you out, and then your role. Just choose your role, whatever you want that to be.

**Pat:** I just want to make sure we got it all, because this isn't like a little thing that you're just going to pull together tomorrow and then it'll be done. This is like a big deal, and I think we've covered a lot of the major points and even a lot of the smaller ones, too. I think people are well-equipped to move forward and do this for their brand and their community too, so thank you again, Lain, for all the help.

Where can people get more information about what you're up to?

**Lain:** They can find me a couple places. [LayoutADay.com](http://LayoutADay.com) is the scrapbooking stuff. If you go over there it's all scrapbooking all the time, so don't expect to find any business stuff. So if you don't want scrapbooking, don't go there, but you can come to [LainEhmann.com](http://LainEhmann.com) and that's where I have all my productivity, mindset, business coaching, personal coaching, that kind of stuff there, motivation and inspirational stuff.

Also if you have questions about this, people can always find me on Facebook at [facebook.com/laineemann](https://facebook.com/laineemann). That's my personal page, and they can track me down there



and I can refer them to whichever one of my other pages might be of most interest to them.

**Pat:** Awesome. Thank you for offering that. We'll have all the links in the show notes right after we hang up here.

Lain, thank you so much. I really appreciate your time, and all the best of luck to you. I can't wait to connect with you again, hopefully not in three years but before that, and just hear even more about the amazing things that you're up to.

**Lain:** Definitely. Thank you so much, Pat.

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**Pat:** I hope you enjoyed that episode with Lain Ehmann. Again, you can check her out at [LayoutADay.com](http://LayoutADay.com) and also [LainEhmann.com](http://LainEhmann.com). You can also come back to the blog and the show notes to get all the links there. You can go to [SmartPassiveIncome.com/session151](http://SmartPassiveIncome.com/session151).

Thank you, Lain. I know you listen to the show. You are amazing, as always. We always appreciate your help. It's just so inspiring. It's sort of like a joke in the internet world to say, "Oh, scrapbooking," or "You can make six figures with knitting" or whatever, but you're actually doing it, so well done. I'm just so inspired, and I know everybody else is too, especially for this idea of putting on a virtual event.

If any of you out there listening to this and are inspired, head on over to [SmartPassiveIncome.com/session151](http://SmartPassiveIncome.com/session151). I want to hear what your plans are. Do you think you're going to start a virtual conference of some sort? Check it out, because all the links are there to help you get started.

Before we finish up, I want to thank today's sponsors. First is [99Designs.com](http://99Designs.com), an amazing site that I've used before. If you have any sort of design needs for your business – and if you're online, of course you need design work done – go to [99Designs.com](http://99Designs.com) for whatever it is you need.

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I also want to thank [Audiobooks.com](https://Audiobooks.com). They were actually the first sponsor ever of the Smart Passive Income podcast back in the 90's – not the 1990s, but the 90's in the episodes. They believed in the show and they were the first one to prove that it was totally worth it to have these spots here at the end to help pay for the show and to help pay for the people who put together the show, so thank you, Audiobooks.com, and they're back to sponsor.

If you go to [Audiobooks.com/spi](https://Audiobooks.com/spi), they have a really cool deal for you, actually. You'll get to download my book, *Let Go*, a bestseller on Amazon, the audio book of that for free. You'll get that plus an additional credit to download any other book that you'd like. The first audio book is on them, so if you like the service you could enjoy a new book every month after that.

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Thank you, guys. I appreciate your time. The show notes are at [SmartPassiveIncome.com/session151](https://SmartPassiveIncome.com/session151). Let me know what you think of the show. I appreciate you guys. Thank you, and I'll see you in the next episode. Peace.

**Outro:** Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income podcast at [www.SmartPassiveIncome.com](https://www.SmartPassiveIncome.com).



## **Links and Resources Mentioned in This Episode:**

### **Today's Guest: Lain Ehmann**

[LayoutADay.com](http://LayoutADay.com)

[LainEhmann.com](http://LainEhmann.com)

[Lain Ehmann on Facebook](#)

[SPI Podcast Session #37](#) with Lain Ehmann – “How to Monetize a Hobby”

[Cisco Webex Event Center](#)

[Spreecast](#)

[E-Junkie](#)

[Gumroad](#)

[Eventbrite](#)

[1 Day Business Breakthrough](#) – April 24 event with Pat Flynn & Chris Ducker

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