



SPI Podcast Session #152 - How a Guest Post Became a Product & The Story of Cole's Classroom

Show notes: www.smartpassiveincome.com/session152

This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session #152.

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 took singing lessons for two weeks in college, Pat Flynn!

Pat: What's up everybody? Pat Flynn here and welcome to Session 152 of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Thank you so much for joining me today. It's going to be a great episode, and I have a little bit of a background story for you to introduce our guest today.

A lot of you know that me and my best friend, Chris Ducker from ChrisDucker.com, (Chris lives in the Philippines) whenever he's in San Diego we do a mastermind session with about 20 people who come in. It's called the 1 Day Business Breakthrough event, and what we do is everybody gets 15 minutes in the hot seat and we break their businesses down, and collectively we all help that person break through those issues and problems that they have.

There's so many success stories that have come out of these days. It's just been so fulfilling for me and Chris. You might remember Shane and Jocelyn Sams, who were alumni, and we've had a number of other alumni featured on the blog and podcast as well.

Today's guest was at our latest 1 Day Business Breakthrough event. He's an alumni from 1DayBB. You can get more information about 1 Day Business Breakthrough at 1DayBB.com.

Actually, Chris and I have our next live event happening, which is going to be bigger than the 20-person event. There's going to be more people there live, but also – since a lot of people have been asking, "How can we get access to it if we can't fly out or we can't drive there, we don't want to get a hotel, we just don't have time?" – this is actually going to be broadcast live over the internet as well.



And if you're watching live on the internet, you'll be able to network and connect with other people as if you were there, too, so it's going to be really, really cool. Check it out. You can go to 1DayBB.com/live.

Our guest today is Cole Humphus and he owns ColesClassroom.com, which is a photography site. There are two things I remember from Cole and his day at 1DayBB with me and Chris. The first thing is just the way he got his business started and the way he monetized his business is a really interesting story, and he tells that story here about how it was really a guest post that someone else posted on his site that really took things off for him. We have a lot of lessons that can be learned from that, and how he's taken that and has grown his business since then.

By the time this episode goes live, I believe he will have just quit his job, so congratulations, Cole, if you're listening to this now. I think a lot of us at the end of this will want to congratulate you as well, especially knowing how well you're doing, too.

The other thing I wanted to mention about Cole that I remember is, because this is sort of a mastermind event, this 1 Day Business Breakthrough thing, anybody can participate and help each other out, and Cole is one of those standout students, I guess you could say, who was really, really outspoken with advice and tips and opinions and help with other people's stuff.

He was just so generous with his time and his effort of thinking about how to help other people. He's just one of those guys who when you meet him and just talk to him for a minute, you can already tell that this guy is just such a nice down to earth guy, and you'll hear that in this episode too.

So without further ado, let's welcome Cole Humphus from ColesClassroom.com.

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Pat: What's up? Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast, buddy.

Cole: Thanks so much for having me. This is awesome!

Pat: This is going to be super cool because we've met in person before and we've had dinner before. Actually, we first met at me and Chris Ducker's 1 Day Business Breakthrough event. You were one of the live attendees and, dude, you just killed it. What you have going on is so amazing. I can't wait to share what you are doing.



Why don't you introduce yourself and what you're doing online to generate income.

Cole: Sure thing. My website is ColesClassroom.com, and Cole's Classroom is all about making you a better photographer. Obviously there's a whole lot of people out there doing that, and I think one of the main differences between Cole's Classroom and other photography blogs is I'm really focused on community.

What I mean by that is not just having a place in a forum-type aspect with a group and all that, but really just focusing on giving that personal touch to my email subscribers, whether it's blog comments or emails, just really me myself getting involved to give that personal touch to an otherwise very distant online world.

As Cole's Classroom has grown, I've sort of started to narrow down the niche towards predominantly photo editing, but it's all out there and it's just been awesome.

I started in 2012, sort of the very end of 2012, and after a 6- or 7-month sort of slow grind, as you can imagine – and you recall probably those early days – once you get a little momentum it's awesome. I just love it and I can't wait to share everything I can about some of the initial success stories that I have with your audience.

Pat: Thank you again for being here. One thing I remember about you, Cole, is when you attended that 1 Day Business Breakthrough event you were so helpful and so giving to everybody else who was there, helping them with their businesses, sharing ideas, and just being so open. I can already tell this is going to be an amazing interview.

I want to go back to what you talked about, the first thing you said when I asked you what your business is. You started talking about the difference that you have in the photography space over everybody else, what your sort of unfair advantage is.

I want everybody to pay attention to that because it's so key, and it was just so cool to hear you say that that was the first thing, because even before you get into business you have to think about what's going to make yours different than everybody else's.

You talked about the personal touch and that's a great advantage to have because nobody's like you, Cole, and nobody's like anybody out there who's listening. When you can make that personal touch, maybe another site is bigger and has better stuff, but if



they don't, they're going to more likely gravitate to you because you're the one actually paying attention to them and caring and actually doing things.

What are some examples of how you give a personal touch to your audience?

Cole: Sure thing. Like I sort of mentioned, but I can definitely go into more detail, the hardest thing is as you grow and as the audience grows and you have more blog comments, you have more YouTube comments, you have more people emailing you, whether it's questions or just to say hello – as you grow in general and as I'm experiencing now, it does get harder to sort of keep up with that personal touch.

But in terms of touch in what I've done and what I still feel I'm keeping up with pretty well, it's the simple things really. It's just simply responding, giving that person an email reply and thanking them for giving you some kind words, or responding to those blog comments, answering their questions.

Most recently I've launched an actual Facebook group. I've sort of created this community, and of course it is a free community, and it has grown in about 5 months to about 3,000 members, which is amazing, and I'm in there. I spend time being in there and answering people's questions.

It's just like you with [Ask Pat](#) and all of the awesome info that you've provided to your audience, that's what sort of separates you from other podcasts or other blogs, and that's what I'm simply trying to do. Really, to be honest, it's not a matter of me trying to do it to make more money or be more successful. It's because I enjoy giving that personal feedback and giving that personal element.

It's a passion to sort of give that value that I know they aren't getting elsewhere, because a lot of other blogs, what they're expecting is to write an email to someone and they're expecting to not hear anything back. I know you get that a lot. If you respond to someone they're probably a lot of times surprised to hear from you, and that surprise element goes a long way.

Pat: That's very true. Over time as the business has grown, it's been really hard for me to respond to everybody, so I've been outsourcing a lot of the responses – not necessarily outsourcing, but I have an executive assistant, Jessica – you heard her in Episode 115 – who responds for me, not as me but for me for certain emails.



The emails that have to go through to me do get put through to me, and when I respond to those I still get the same effect. "Wow, you actually responded." People often ask, "Is this Jessica or is this Pat?" It's so funny.

Let's rewind and go back to 2012 when you first started this. Did you have a job at the time that you started this site?

Cole: Yes. I'll give a really quick background with how I got involved with the online space, and even a little before that. Out of college I started working for a finance company here in San Diego. I think I sort of had some entrepreneurial spirit that I never really totally knew, but me and my buddies at lunch a lot of times would just sort of talk about business ideas. We were trying to think of what we could do to get out of the corporate grind, so to speak. This was in 2008.

One day I had the idea of wedding photography. I got so jazzed on this idea because to me, sort of Mr. Business, I thought, "This is the perfect side gig. It'll happen on the weekends, I'll work during the week, and I can have this extra income." I went and told a few people and they just laughed at me because they said, "You don't even have a camera. You aren't a photographer."

I said, "Well, you know, I understand that, but with the internet I'm sure I can teach myself. At the end of the day if it's not something I enjoy or if it's not something I can do or am good at, I'll just simply have a decent camera."

So I won't go into the details, but the company was born, Cole Joseph Photography, and to this day five years later we have grown through the ranks and become one of the top wedding photographers here in San Diego, and it's just been amazing. That was sort of where my passion for photography started, albeit at a level of purely business, but it quickly turned into passion.

In 2012 I was doing a photo shoot for a fellow internet marketer, a buddy of mine, and I was asking him about his website. Stupidly, or naively I should say, I said, "How's your website doing, man?"

"Oh, it's good."

"Are you making a lot of money on advertisements or what?" I'm sure you've heard that before, Pat, right?



He said, "No, I'm doing these summits," and long story short I picked his brain. I said, "That's funny, dude, because I've been thinking about doing photography online."

He said, "Oh, you'd kill it!" so I went back to the computer and instantly started researching blogging and online business. Slowly after that I came across Smart Passive Income and just sort of hit the ground running. I launched my first YouTube video in October 2012 and it's been a grind, albeit a nice steady run ever since.

Pat: So you set up a website, and the first thing you did was you had a YouTube video, which was about what?

Cole: Actually it's sort of funny you say that. The first video I ever did was just a run-through of our exact wedding photography equipment that we take to every wedding. What's funny about that is it's really hard being on video. It's very scary, very intimidating, but I knew right from the get-go that I wanted to not only go after Google, meaning organic – written blog posts, search engine optimization type thing – but I wanted to sort of attack the YouTube market, so to speak.

I was sort of doing a tag team. I did have a blog. I instantly had ColesClassroom.com launched and I was starting to write, but I was also doing YouTube videos. The funny thing was, that first video I think I cropped my head out because the video aspect ratio was different than what I was used to, and I looked and sounded nervous. Then that video I think for the first year had more views than any other video.

It was sort of ironic in my mind that probably the poorest video I had done ended up being the one that sort of helped launch me and get my audience.

Pat: That's really cool. I think that's a great story. I really love the fact that when you first started and had these inklings to become an entrepreneur, you went into a niche that you had hardly any experience with. I mean I'm sure you'd taken photos with a digital camera or your phone at the time, but you didn't even have a professional camera, yet you wanted to be a wedding photographer.

That story alone is just really cool and shows that no matter where you're at, you can always make a change in your life.

Cole: Totally. I think the thing as well, especially for anyone else listening, maybe they've been following you for a long time and they have their own ideas and they want to do something in the online realm and they want to get a piece of the action but they



feel they don't have time, it's just like me. Even if time wasn't the issue, it was the fact that I hadn't even owned a camera before.

All I'm trying to say is if you want something bad enough, you're going to make it happen. In this day and age there's so many amazing resources available, from building websites to producing videos. There's so much technology and so much knowledge out there on the web. This is like unprecedented times where it's out there for you to go after and it's just so inspiring.

Pat: So you did your work on the weekends, obviously, because you were doing wedding shoots, and you still had your job at the time when you went into wedding photography or did you quit to go full-time?

Cole: No, I was definitely still employed. Actually I'm just about one month away to the day of quitting my full-time job, so this is sort of a timely podcast because it's a real exciting time for me. It's time to sort of ramp up and scale up and get away from the corporate job.

Pat: So you have this successful photography business. You have a successful online photography-related business, yet you're still working a 9-5 job.

Cole: Pretty crazy, I know.

Pat: Talk about that. What made you "stick around" for so long?

Cole: A lot of people I think when they now know that I'm quitting my job, it's not the cheapest cost of living here in San Diego so people think, "You're crazy to be quitting your job!" They think I'm really risky because I have this house and my wife and "How are you going to do it with just weddings?" and a lot of them don't even know the magnitude that online business can really have. The truth is, I'm really not that risky of a guy.

So to answer your question, I've been able to spend my time smartly enough and work smartly enough that I've been able to juggle all three things. Of course, when you're able to build these things that even if they start on the side and they're growing, on top of your day job which is paying a very nice salary, sometimes it's hard to just walk away because, at the end of the day, I'm still going to be walking away from a very nice amount of money which is a for-sure thing each and every month and putting food on the table.



In terms of why I was doing it, it was really just to really just make sure that I was making a financially wise decision and ultimately set myself up to where I could go ahead and quit.

By the way, my wife is quitting as well, so we're doing this double whammy, but by building them both on the side for so long, we now have the confidence that we're going to be okay now, because we've already sort of busted our butt juggling it all for the last couple years.

Pat: Was it until you reached a certain level of savings, or until you reached a certain level of income from the online stuff that you made this decision? Or what really spurred the decision to finally just say, "Okay, it's time to go full-time with this"?

Cole: A big switch was sort of made probably about a year ago with me, and the switch was really mentally finally realizing that there's a lot more in life than just making money and working. It wasn't that I ever really wanted to work say 7 days a week juggling three jobs forever, but I sort of moved up that timeline in my head.

I looked at where we've been and, yeah, we've been successful with bringing in money and building businesses and it's been awesome, and that money has really given us freedom to go travel and do really cool things. But what we didn't have was we didn't have time. We didn't have time for each other, for family, for the freedom to go travel to Europe for a couple weeks if we wanted, and not have to worry about going back to a job.

Sort of the big decision point was, "Hey, we aren't getting any younger. You never know what tomorrow will bring, so let's change it up and let's live right now."

Pat: Love it. Thank you for being honest with that.

Cole: That's not to discount that obviously we wouldn't be making this decision if ColesClassroom hadn't grown to a certain point. I didn't have an actual number in my mind, but this last year, which was my first year of actually monetizing the business, far exceeded my gut goal that I had for 2014. It really sort of opened up the idea that, "Wow, if we did this well with part-time work, I think we could really scale it up nicely if I had an extra 40 hours a week to contribute."

Pat: Can you give us some insight on what 2014 was like for you?



Cole: Sure. I launched my first product basically at the end of 2013 in December, so pretty much 2014 was the first clean year start to finish, and I didn't know what to expect in terms of dollars or anything like that.

I had this random number of my head of, "Man, it'd be great if I could make \$50,000," and we passed that I think around the mid-year point. I was thinking, "Wow, this is really good," and I just sort of put pedal to the metal and launched a couple more products and really went for it. We ended up closing out the year at \$135,000 in revenue.

Pat: Dude, congrats. That's awesome!

Cole: Thanks so much. It sort of in a way just blew me away, but like I said it just showed me the potential that's there. Today we've grown the email subscribers to over 46,000. We're growing about 150 new subscribers a day organically. I've been running some Facebook boosted post type things and I'll get another 200 or so from that, so I'm definitely just in sort of scale-up mode at the moment, and it feels awesome.

Pat: So you started the blog in 2012, then you started posting on YouTube around the same time, and you said you didn't monetize until almost the end of 2013. So you went maybe a year and a half purely providing content.

Cole: Totally. It was actually not quite a year and a half, but a little more than a year, so one full year of just purely content, content, and trying to build that audience.

Pat: What made you decide to finally monetize? I think that's a big decision that a lot of people have to make. They may spend a lot of time building an audience, or they might have an audience already, and they just kind of struggle with making that decision. "How can I monetize something that I've already done and given away for free?"

Give us your thought process when at the end of 2013 you were ready to monetize your site.

Cole: Especially with me or anyone out there who's doing this online thing on the side, it's so nice to get kudos and blog comments, but those don't pay the bills. There wasn't a doubt in my mind when I started it that ultimately I wanted to make money from Cole's Classroom.



When I launched Cole's Classroom I didn't really have a plan of what that first product was going to look like or what it was going to be. What happened was it just so happened that the one post that sort of got ranked really high on Google and started bringing in most of my traffic was actually on newborn photography.

The sort of funny thing about that is that was actually a guest post. That wasn't one I wrote. Chrystal Cienfuegos Photography in San Diego is an amazing newborn photographer, she's a friend of mine, so we were bringing in all these newborn photographers to the website.

Instantly light bulbs went off in my head and I thought, "Well, there I have it. Give the people what they want. Most of my list at the moment is for newborn photography, so we're going to create a newborn photography course, and naturally I'm going to at least talk to Chrystal and see if she wants to be involved on that."

So we put together an A to Z everything you need to know to become a successful newborn photographer, and that was our first course.

Pat: How much did that course sell for?

Cole: That course launched at \$197.

Pat: Tell us what is this course like? Is it videos? Is it a webinar series where they get access to you?

Cole: It's a totally passive video workshop type product. I had a videographer buddy who came over, and obviously we sketched out the outline of, "What is it that people are going to need to know if they want to get into newborn photography?"

In literally one full day with our videographer we just banged it out on the couch in front of the camera. I was basically the host and the teacher, so to speak, helping ask Chrystal these questions that people would want to learn from, and that was it.

We also had a segment where we followed Chrystal on an actual photo shoot, so over a day and a half of actual recording we put it together, edited it down and packaged it up, and that's it. There is no membership type aspect or forum aspect to that course.



Pat: So it's all a complete suite of information with videos and things like that to help people become newborn photographers, put together in a day and a half. Listen to that, everybody. A day and a half. In two days you can have your course ready to go.

Cole: Well, that was just the recording.

Pat: So obviously it took more time to set it up and things like that. Then walk us through the process. You have this, it's complete, this package is ready to go. Then the marketing of it, before you push out and launch, how did you get people ready for this, or did you just put links on that post and maybe send an email out?

Cole: At that time I vaguely remember my list was just shy of 10,000 subscribers, so I had a fairly decent-sized list. It was as simple as marketing it through my list, and at the time I was using Mail Chimp. Of course, I did include links and a banner on that post that to this day is still ranking in Google. But for that initial launch it was just a simple email.

Honestly, I don't even think I had any follow-up emails, and I surely didn't have the list segmented. If I recall, I think the product from that email, I want to say it brought in \$2,500 or \$3,000, or it might have even been a little less.

I think it was somewhere around \$2,000 right away, which isn't a lot of money but at that time I remember when my phone buzzed with that special ring tone I had for Cole's Classroom. It felt like that first sale came within like 60 seconds from when I sent that email.

Instantly you just get this feeling of, "Oh my gosh, I just made \$200 and I'm just sitting here." Obviously that's a little spark to go after it more and more and more, and build more products and give more value.

Pat: It just makes me remember my first sale and just kind of being so blown away by it. I had to go outside and walk around a little bit.

Cole: It's sort of addicting.

Pat: Yeah. And then when I got back to my computer from that walk there was another sale that came through. I was like, "Wow, this passive income thing is for real!"



Speaking of passive income, this course is still available I assume. Is it still making sales?

Cole: It is. There's actually a full newborn suite of products, because I also have some newborn Lightroom presets, which is a tool for photo editing. They're definitely still probably one of the best-selling products that we have.

I think a lot of that is I'm getting warm leads every single day. As long as that newborn photography tips post is still in Google, when people are searching for newborn photography tips they're seeing my site right at the top. It makes sense that that product is still selling so well because people are looking for help and here it is. "Oh, by the way, if you want more we have this workshop available."

Pat: That's really cool, so you have the newborn photography course and you have the Lightroom filters, is that what you said?

Cole: Right. They're called Lightroom presets. For anyone who's not a photographer, presets in Lightroom are far more complex than an Instagram filter but it's the same idea. It's basically just bundling a collection of settings, so to speak, so that with one click you can have a different look to your photos when you're editing.

Pat: That's very cool. How are those selling?

Cole: Awesome. People love the presets. Your podcast is one of the ones I listen to the most, and I forget who it was but I remember someone on your podcast on one episode talking about "People want to buy tools. Give them tools," I think that idea of, "Just give me the tools." They want something quick. They want a result quick, and I think that's why the presets for me have sold so well.

People see my photos. They see that I'm using the presets. It's easy to show them, in terms of how you apply them, and within 5 minutes they could have purchased it, downloaded it to their computer, imported them into Lightroom, and instantly are applying my custom looks to their photos. So the presets definitely sell good, truthfully a little more so than a lot of my more detailed video workshops.

Pat: Interesting, so you have other workshops, too. Let's talk about this tool thing really quick. That was Clay Collins from LeadPages who had mentioned that. He had mentioned if you're going to do a lead magnet, some type of ebook or a give-away, make it short and just make it about the tools. That's what people want. You don't



necessarily have to make that lead magnet a 90-page thing that people aren't always going to read anyway, so tools are a fantastic thing.

I know from experience through selling the [Smart Podcast Player](#) that it's just such a cool feeling to see people purchase something and use it and get what they paid for right then and there, as opposed to information which people first have to consume and then put into action, and then even then they might not get the same results.

Cole: Totally. And it's funny that you mention Clay Collins. That was the first webinar that I think I ever watched, which was the one that you did with him on LeadPages and getting subscribers. That was also the first product that I ever purchased on a webinar. I didn't mean to go and listen and end up coming out purchasing something, but I did. That was really what lit the spark at Cole's Classroom was getting [LeadPages](#).

This isn't any sort of paid endorsement. I'm not even an affiliate of LeadPages, but literally it just ramped up my email subscriber list so much that, from that point forward, it's how I've been able to bring on so many new email subscribers. My presets optin page, over a year's worth of data, still has an average conversion of 65%.

Pat: This really excites me, Cole, when you talk about LeadPages like this. If most of you don't know already, I'm an advisor for the company, and just to hear these types of things, which I hear all the time, is really cool.

Can you give us more specific tactics and strategies on how you're building your email list, whether they're related to LeadPages or not? You don't need LeadPages obviously to build a list. You can run a lot of the same tactics without it, but how are you building your list? You mentioned a landing page for your presets. How are you promoting that landing page and what are you offering?

Cole: Sure thing. My main lead magnet is simply 15 free Lightroom presets. A long time ago I knew that I needed something really valuable that people would want so I could build my list, and I came up with that even before I knew I was ultimately going to sell presets.

I use LeadPages because, quite frankly, I'm not a graphic designer. I'm not very good at it at all, and I'm definitely not a web designer. It's just so easy to make a page that really converts really well.

Pat: I swear I didn't pay you to say this, for everybody out there listening.



Cole: No, that's the truth. There's so many other people out there that also aren't web designers, so for me it's just so simple and easy. And I like stats, so it's nice that they have it so you can split test. Anyway, LeadPages is awesome.

The way I use LeadPages is I have my one actual lead page, and the funny thing is at the time it was what they would label as their simple lead page or lead conversion or optin page, and I'm using the stock photo that they have on their template of some attractive girl looking at the optin box.

I just said, "Well, let's give it a shot and see how the statistics go, and if the conversion is failing I'll try a different photo," and with this 70% conversion at the time I thought, "There's no reason to change it."

On my website I have various lead boxes. In terms of my strategy, what I have is by blog category, so if someone is on a blog post about wedding photography I have a button which links to a lead box that is basically targeted with my copy, my words, to try to appeal to wedding photographers, to give them more wedding photography info. On a photo editing blog post I have something targeted like, "Hey, sign up and get my free presets."

In addition to LeadPages and lead boxes I use [Optin Monster](#), so I have an optin popup that actually converts very well, too. That converts about 6-7% in terms of cold traffic coming to the site.

And like I mentioned at the beginning, I just now started with Facebook ads, but really it's more of a Facebook boosted post, which has been working really, really well for me for those presets, and I send them straight to the LeadPage. I don't even mess with having them go to my website. I just want them to go straight to that 65% converting LeadPage.

Pat: Because that's where they get on your list, and then you can take care of them from there.

Cole: Right, and on Facebook right now my average client acquisition cost on those subscribers on my ad spend is no more than 20 cents a pop.



Pat: So you're paying essentially through Facebook ads 20 cents per email that's coming into your email list. Then of course you take them through a process where eventually you pitch them something.

Can you go through the process of what happens when people subscribe to your list? Do you have those lists segmented based off of those types of posts that you mentioned earlier?

Cole: I did. As you remember when we had dinner, I actually had moved from Mail Chimp over to Ontraport. Without going into details, I've since moved to Infusionsoft, which I'm loving, so I'm with [Infusionsoft](#) now.

With Ontraport I had set up different funnels so that if someone came in for wedding photography they were in the wedding photography funnel. What that consisted of wasn't even products. That's just pure content, which obviously would be tied to that subject. Then there's photo editing, and then I even have a category which is beginner photography.

What I realized from the statistics was, sort of much to my dismay, I really was hoping to have more people coming in from a wider variety of those topics, and I didn't see that at all. Most of my subscribers are coming in to learn about photo editing. They're coming in for me to teach them about Lightroom.

With that said, I didn't want to have all these funnels if most of the people weren't even entering the funnels to begin with, so with Infusionsoft, the way my funnel and my sequences look is they opt in and they instantly get their welcome email. It's very personal in tone and it's very appreciative that they're here.

I give them the link where they can go grab their free presets and I let them know, "In the next day or two you're going to get some awesome stuff from me, so make sure to stick around because I'm going to send you my very best tutorials, the most popular ones I've ever published."

The very next day I give them their very first tutorial, which is one on Lightroom, fixing skin tones in photo editing. But before I go into the content there I actually start off the top of the email letting them know a little bit more about myself, because I want to let them know I'm a real person and they're hearing from me.



I have a couple photos, and I sort of talk about the photos. One of them is me playing guitar, and I talk about my band. Another one is Nicole, my wife, with our little dog, Chloe, our little Yorkie. The whole point is to sort of really quickly show them, "a) thanks for being here, b) I'm a real person, and more importantly I've got a lot of value to send you, so stick around."

I think right now I have 15 different emails in the sequence. I do about 3 or 4 of pure content and then I have a product that I offer them or show them if they want to learn more. I am planning on revising that and really putting in some sort of if/then type logic, but since I've just literally moved to Infusionsoft two weeks ago I haven't got to that point.

Pat: I still think it's really insightful what you talked about, where you set up these funnels but then you realized that just one of them is really the one that was taking off for you, so you sort of shifted gears. Like you said at the beginning of the podcast, you're sort of niching down even further.

Cole: Yeah, totally. I think like you say, the riches are in the niches. Photography is such a general topic. It's so broad. Even at the 1 Day Business Breakthrough and just anything, it's so important to try to find your target client or your ideal audience, and it's hard.

I sort of started off with that wide net. I know wedding photography so I had wedding photography, and I know editing really well. Then I have business stuff. I'm a business man. I love talking about it and really, really some of my best stuff is on pricing and business, but unfortunately those are some of the least-visited blog posts I have.

It's sort of like don't fight the tide. If the data is showing me that the people want photo editing help or photo editing tools, then I should probably put a lot of my focus there.

Pat: Do you ever battle with the fact that this might not be going down the direction you thought it would be going down, in terms of now you're starting to become the "Help me edit" guy or the Lightroom guy? Do you ever think about that?

Cole: I haven't because fortunately even before I started Cole's Classroom I became an editing guy. I enjoyed it and I really was on a mission to try and develop a process that was so efficient and so effective, and I sort of did. I had to.



The first year that I was doing weddings, I was doing it on top of my full-time day job and we did 20 weddings that year. I literally couldn't afford to spend 24 hours editing for every wedding that we shot. I didn't want to and that just eats into your profits.

So to answer your question, no. I'm okay with being the editing guy. Quite frankly, I'm starting to become known as the Lightroom guy and I'm okay with that because it's something that I've put a lot of time and heart into becoming an expert in.

Pat: I'm also thinking about myself because at Smart Passive Income we do a ton of different experiments in all different types of platforms and niches and things like that. I would feel like if I just stuck with podcasts, and everything became only podcasts and I became known as the podcasting guy, there would be this whole group of people that I would be leaving behind.

I think a lot of people would feel the same way, and I want to have a conversation about this just in case they're met with something like this in the future. It's important to look at Analytics and see what's working for you and go down that direction, but then there's a line there. Who might you be leaving behind, and should you even worry about them?

Like what if you became known as the editing guy, but you're still getting all these newborn photographers in? Maybe you just happen to be in a great situation because editing applies in all different facets of photography.

Cole: Totally. I really don't have an intention on nicheing it down to where that's the only content that I'm showing, because I still want to give value in more ways than just editing help, especially with my passion being on the business side of things as well.

But in terms of your example, Pat, it's somewhat different. I understand what you're saying about podcasts. You don't want to only do podcasts if there's other people that live elsewhere and want to see you on YouTube and all that kind of stuff, but I think the difference would be that's a different platform but it's potentially the same content. You're just delivering it in a different manner, and I'm a believer in that.

That's why I do YouTube videos, and I'm actually thinking about getting into podcasting because I think there's pros and cons to each, but there's so much value to be had when you can hear the voice on a podcast, or when you can actually see an online tutorial or whatever.



So I'm right there with you, but I would suggest and advise – not that I think you're going to do it – but keep doing it all if you've got the time for it, because you definitely will reach other people. Some will prefer the podcast and some like to read on the blog posts.

Pat: Right. I know that I came to a point a year and a half ago where I had to make a decision to expand on these other platforms, or for some it's going back to these platforms, like YouTube which I left behind but I'm now back with [SPI TV](#).

Do I do that and burn out and risk the chance of having each of those things be just not up to par, or do I hire more people to make that happen? As most people know, I've hired people – not employees but contractors – and I've worked with a lot of people to help me produce the things I want to produce to get into all these different spaces.

I know I'm sort of unique in that position in the online world, where I feel like I have to keep trying new things for the purposes of seeing how I can win with it or fail with it, to help other people in case that happens to be the way that they want to do things. But this isn't a show about me, this a show about you, Cole.

Cole: I was just going to make sure I didn't go off on a tangent by continuing on with that thought you had.

Pat: Let's bring it back home because we're closing up here. This has just been a fantastic interview, Cole. Why don't you tell us what's on deck for you. So you've built this successful online business and you're about to quit your job. Do you have a specific date on when you're going to do that?

Cole: Yeah, my last day is March 5, so it's coming up quick and we can't wait. What the plan is going to be is to really focus on scaling the business. My goal is to just really maximize building the email list, building that community, and have the opportunity to really put out more content.

I hit it hard in the beginning because I had to, and this last probably six months I've scaled back on how much new content I've put out. Luckily the dollars have still been coming in, so that's good, but really I want to get into giving more value and putting out new content.



I'm going to have the opportunity to really focus more, and that's been the hardest thing by juggling three different jobs, is to really focus, especially when you have limited time. So I'm most excited about being able to focus and develop some new products. I want to develop a membership sort of aspect to Cole's Classroom.

And I'm actually starting all over again with my sister, who's an executive chef and had recently quit. We just launched a site that I built for her called [Kat's Kitchen Collective](#), so it's going to be interesting. I definitely need the time because I'm trying to scale Cole's Classroom, which has already been up and running, but I'm also helping guide her to build her audience.

It's sort of forcing me to remember what it was like back in those early days. She's off to an amazing start, but it's definitely humbling to go back to those first months.

Pat: Right. I felt the same way when I built [FoodTruckr](#). It was nice to get into it again and see where I was, so I can remember how to teach people when they're starting out, too, so that's really cool. Thank you for sharing that, Cole. So your sister quit, you're quitting, and your wife is quitting too.

Cole: We're all quitting.

Pat: You're far from a bunch of quitters, though. You guys are action takers, so that's so awesome.

Cole, again, thank you so much for sharing your story and these tips with us. It's going to be really, really helpful for people, and this show will go live less than a week after you quit, so I will be the first – using my special time travel tools – to congratulate you on quitting your job. We wish you all the best.

Really quick, would you want to share your website URL one more time, and maybe where else people can connect with you?

Cole: Sure. Thanks Pat. It's been awesome. People can find me at [ColesClassroom.com](#). Go over there and grab your free presets. The best way to get a hold of me is through Facebook at the [Cole's Classroom page](#), or even email: cole@colesclassroom.com. Absolutely feel free to send me an email. I'd love to hear from you all.



Pat: We'll have that all available in the show notes for everybody, so stay tuned and I'll tell you all the information about that. This is Episode 152. Then you can even wish him good luck and congrats on quitting as well on the Facebook page. We'll have all the show notes at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session152.

Cole, you rock, buddy! Thanks for all the inspiration, and we'll have to have dinner again sometime soon.

Cole: Sounds great, Pat. Talk soon, man.

Pat: Talk soon.

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I hope you enjoyed that episode with Cole Humphus from ColesClassroom.com. Of course we'll have all the show notes available for you at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session152.

Thanks again, Cole, for coming on. We'll have to get dinner again sometime. He and I live fairly close to each other so we'll hang out, and I'll keep you up-to-date on his stuff too, because he's got some great things going on. Today actually he did a webinar – the day I'm recording this – and he was just telling me how pumped he was for it.

So Cole, congratulations, well done, and thank you for sharing all your wisdom and your experience. You're such a cool story. I hope it inspires a lot of you out there, and hopefully gets a lot of you to take action, just like what Cole's doing.

Before we go I also want to thank today's sponsors:

99Designs.com is an awesome site, and if you go there you'll get some incredible designs done for your business. If you need any sort of design work done – and we all know that if you're doing stuff online you need design work done at some point – and if you don't have enough money to hire that one strong designer that can be with you full-time, which I know a lot of you struggle with because design is hard. I was really fortunate to have Photoshop experience, but even then I needed other people's help – you can try 99Designs.com.



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Thank you guys so much for listening, and thank you, Cole, for being our guest on the show today. I can't wait to bring you next week's episode, we've got a ton of great stuff going on.

I hope you all are enjoying [SPI TV](https://SPI.TV). If you don't know, I have a TV show. It's not actually a TV show because it's not on television. You can't tune in on your box at home unless you're on iTunes, but you can check it out. It's a video podcast, or on YouTube as well.

If you go to WatchSPI.tv you can check that out. We've had a number of episodes go out. They come out every Friday and people are loving it, and I'm just loving getting back on YouTube and getting in front of you guys in that way.



Again, thank you so much. This is Episode 152 and I appreciate you guys. I'll see you in 153. Peace.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income podcast at www.SmartPassiveIncome.com.

Links and Resources Mentioned in This Episode:

Today's Guest: Cole Humphus

[Cole's Classroom](#)

[Kat's Kitchen Collective](#)

[Cole's Classroom on Facebook](#)

email - cole@colesclassroom.com

Pat's Links

[1 Day Business Breakthrough](#) event with Chris Ducker, April 24

[Ask Pat](#)

[Smart Podcast Player](#)

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