



SPI Podcast Session #158 – How to Productize Your Service-Based Business

Show notes: www.smartpassiveincome.com/session158

This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session #158.

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 lives in San Diego and has never been to Comic Con, Pat Flynn!

Pat: What's up everybody? Welcome to Episode 158 of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Today I have a special guest on who is bringing something a little bit different to the show. We often have experts on the show who talk about how to build your online business from scratch or how to create an awesome product or things like that, and those are really helpful episodes.

However, there's a certain segment of the audience that often seems to be left out or feel like they're left out at least, and these are the people who are freelancers, who work by the hour and who are paid by the hour, who own nothing more than their time, who often feel like they're stuck working with clients. As soon as they stop working they stop making money, and that's not very passive income, is it?

So I'm really excited to introduce to you Brian Casel from Casjam.com. He has a product out there called [Productize](#), and I've actually started working with Brian over on [FoodTruckr.com](#) because he has a business called [RestaurantEngine.com](#). I worked with him because he's helping restaurant owners and food truck owners create websites.

Often when you think about creating websites for food truck owners you might think you're going to have to work with each individual restaurant or food truck owner and really kind of just figure out what exactly their needs are, but Brian's taken that to the next level and he's productized his service, and that's what his product is called. It's called [Productize](#).

It's helping you – the freelancer, the person who's getting paid by the hour – take the path of least resistance and create a productized service, which from your customers' perspective offers a specialized done-for-you solution with a compelling value. They know what they're going to get when they go into it, and it's packaged at a set price and scope.



From your perspective – the founder or the product owner or the freelancer at this point – a productized service is one that runs systematically, and it continues to produce and grow with or without your direct involvement. If that doesn't excite you, I don't know what will.

This is going to be a really special episode, again something much different than what we normally hear in terms of building an online business. This could be something that could really save you in terms of the time that you spend, and also how you work with clients. I know how often that can really be a headache for people, so this is an alternative to billing by the hour.

Here we go, let's get right into it. This is Building a Productized Business with Brian Casel.

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Pat: What's up, Brian? Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast. How are you, man?

Brian: Hey Pat, how's it going? Thanks for having me on.

Pat: This is going to be great. I think this is a much-needed conversation we're going to have. Why don't you tell everybody really quick all the good stuff we're going to get into. What is your specialty? What is your super power online?

Brian: In these last few months I've been talking a lot and teaching about this idea of productized services, really moving from the freelance model of billing by the hour to a productized version of that, and really kind of positioning your services as a freelancer or consultant as a product.

There's a lot more that goes along with that in really positioning it as a product and marketing it as a product and a lot of benefits that come with that, so that's really what I've been kind of focused on lately.

Pat: Oh man, this is so good because this is what passive income is all about, taking something that you know and turning it into something that can then work passively for you. Obviously if you're a freelancer you've got to put in that time to make that money, correct?



Brian: Yeah exactly, and that's the biggest challenge that I see freelancers facing, and I certainly faced this myself for many years. Your income is directly tied to your time, especially when you're billing by the hour.

I actually used to bill per project. I come from a background of a freelance web designer and I used to build per project and occasionally by the hour, but either way it was still very much tied to my time. I could only fit in a certain number of projects and I was basically living project to project throughout the year.

Then I was able to launch a productized service business, and over time with a lot of work and refinement and iteration I've been able to completely systematize this business so that it does run itself. I've delegated and really streamlined the entire process, and I've removed myself from all the day-to-day so that this business runs and grows essentially without me.

Pat: That's so cool. Why don't we rewind and go back to your story. Before you started freelancing, what were you doing before then?

Brian: Before all that I was actually doing music composition and production for a little while. I went to school for that, but shortly after school I got into the web industry. I'd been dabbling in it before, but then I got into it professionally and started working at a web design agency in New York. I was there for about 3 years or so and then I went out on my own as a freelance web designer.

I've been self-employed now for about 7 or 8 years, and about 4 years ago I really started making that shift away from just straight freelance web design into building products. I did a few different things like selling WordPress themes and other little products here and there, and ebooks and what not. But the thing that I really kind of sunk my teeth into for a couple of years was [RestaurantEngine](#), which is a productized service business.

Essentially we do web design for restaurants and food trucks, then we eventually branched out and made one for hotels and B&Bs. That's at [HotelPropeller.com](#).

So over the course of 3-4 years of building up that business, essentially it's now a SAS (software as service) business with a productized service component where we on-board every new customer and set up their site and give them ongoing support and hosting and all that.



Along the way I've really focused heavily on the systems and streamlining the entire process and forming a small team so that every step in that process of bringing on new customers every week is completely handled.

So I'm actually now free to focus on the bigger picture, whether that's developing new products or growing the business, focusing on marketing, or from time to time actually taking a vacation with my family without having to worry about, "I'm not getting paid this week" and all that kind of stuff.

Pat: So when you're a freelancer if you're just starting out, this isn't about creating a product. This isn't creating ebooks or things like that, and this isn't creating information for your audience so that they can do these things themselves. You still are providing a service, but you personally just aren't the one taking care of it.

Brian: Yeah, and I think that there are definitely a lot of different directions that you can go with this. With productized services, often otherwise called productized consulting, you can kind of scale it up with that focus on delegation and having the business run itself.

I've got plenty of really great examples. I think your listeners probably know Dan Norris from [WordPress Curve](#). He's a great example of a productized service that runs on a very large scale at this point. They've been growing rapidly over the last year.

You can also kind of go the other way and stay focused and stay small. I know a lot of consultants who've gotten into productized consulting, where they chose to stay solo or maybe with one assistant or what not. That allows them to focus on what they truly want to be focusing on, like maybe that's their core craft, being creative and kind of streamlining or outsourcing just the more mundane tedious day-to-day stuff.

Pat: For everybody out there, Dan Norris from WP Curve has been on the podcast before. That was [Episode 134](#). Currently there are 732 comments on that post, so he brought some good stuff. His company is doing an amazing job and I really resonate with what he's done. They're doing something that is a service for people who have WordPress sites, and they are growing at a very, very high rate and are doing really, really well.

There's a lot of listeners out there listening right now, and how can a person understand if productizing their service is for them?



Brian: I think if you kind of resonate with a lot of these challenges like I talked about, like your income is really tied to your time. Another one that really struck home for me, which was a big reason I decided to get into products and looking to productize the service, was the negotiation or the discovery process, those long drawn-out meetings and phone calls that happen before the contract is even signed for a new project.

You have to get into these meetings and you have to figure out the scope of a new project and get all the client's requirements and see what their goals are and just unpack all that stuff. I would then go back and write a really long proposal. I'd spend a day on that at least, and then I'd go back and present the proposal. Maybe 50% of the time I would win that contract, and the other times not. So essentially every time I'm reinventing what I do or reinventing the value for each individual client.

I kind of wanted to move away from that and get into a more standardized predictable service, essentially a productized service that just does one thing extremely well, solves one problem exceptionally well, and it's really designed for one particular client. That just removes that whole discovery and negotiation from the table so that I can just focus on providing great service and kind of leave it at that.

I'd say if anyone kind of resonates with these kinds of challenges, then I think it's certainly worth looking at this as a potential option.

The other thing that really makes me excited about productized services in general is there's a lot of focus these days on making that leap from freelancing and billing by the hour into creating some kind of product, whether that's a course, an ebook, software, or an app. For many people that is a huge leap to make.

Pat: It absolutely is. We've had people talk about coursework before, David Siteman Garland and Amy Porterfield in back-to-back episodes. People love those episodes, but you're right, some people who are just starting out are not quite there yet.

Brian: And there's nothing wrong with going that route. It's a fantastic thing to strive for. I kind of look at productized services as a bridge between those two, like the path of least resistance I like to call it. You can really launch a productized service very quickly.



Going back to what Dan did with WP Curve, I think he launched that in less than 7 days. He literally just kind of put the offer out there and he had paying customers within a week.

Of course a lot more goes into that, figuring out the right value proposition and what not, but a productized service lets you kind of start to make that transition away from billing by the hour into thinking more like a business owner and transitioning into that product mindset.

Pat: Love it. You had mentioned about this whole focusing on one thing and doing it really well, and I feel like that's a theme that has come up in multiple episodes, just focusing on one thing.

Gary Keller and Jay Papasan's book, *The One Thing*, it's so important. This is a great way to sort of take that and actually use it and go with it if you're a freelancer just starting out – being really good at that one thing.

It doesn't sound like that's the path to do when you're just starting out. You kind of want to serve everybody. You want to try everything. But when you're good at one thing, people will go to you for that particular solution, and Restaurant Engine is a great example. That's how Brian and I connected, was through Restaurant Engine and FoodTruckr, and it's been amazing experience for all the food truck owners out there who have used this service.

Why don't we get into more specific strategies and things that people can take away from this episode in terms of how do they go about doing this. It's a great theory, I guess you could say, if you want to call it that, but how do we actually put this into action, Brian?

Brian: Great question. Like you said, it does start with focus. As you start to productize what you're doing it really begins with crafting that killer value proposition, and the key to doing that is focus. What I mean by that is you want to be focusing in on one service for one customer. Perhaps a better way of putting that would be to focus on one problem and one solution. You kind of want to get away from doing everything and anything.

I really relate to this myself. When I was doing freelance web design I used to do it all. I used to design mock-ups, code HTML and CSS, create WordPress themes, plugins, got into logo design and copywriting and mobile sites and email. The list went on and on. I



was doing everything for all these different clients and it was just really hard to focus that value proposition.

Your goal is to really hone in on one service for one customer, and there's a lot more that goes into this process that I like to teach. For instance, as you start to focus on one service you really want to focus in on one thing that clients are willing to pay for.

For a lot of us, we can look to what our clients have already been paying us for. Chances are they're paying us for a lot of different things, but you want to start looking at that list of services that clients have paid you for, and try to hone in on what are the most high-value items. Perhaps there are actual line items on your invoices that clients come to you again and again for.

Another way that I like to look at it is think back to those conversations that you're having with clients in those discovery meetings or pre-sales conversations. What are the questions that keep coming up again and again? Those are good indicators that that's something that clients really care about. They might even be make or break items. That just gives you that indication that it's something high-value for those clients.

Pat: Let's play a little game. Let's pretend my name is Pat and I'm a freelance writer. Coach me through how to figure out what my one thing will be. Can we do that really quick?

Brian: Yeah, sure.

Pat: Okay. I freelance write. I have a lot of different clients. I do a lot of different things from ghostwriting to writing blog articles to doing research and posting on people's blogs and editing and all those sorts of things.

Brian: The first thing that I would look at is try to look into the type of work that you've been doing with your clients and figure out what part of all that – whether it's the research aspect, the actual writing of the articles, the formatting and promoting and social media promotion of the articles – what is that one thing that clients come to you for because they can't do it themselves or they don't want to do it themselves?

Pat: I've also been doing a lot of transcripts. With podcasting becoming more popular and people doing their videos, and with SEO with the transcripts if you include those with the videos, a lot of people are asking me to do transcriptions now, and I do those all myself currently.



Brian: That is a great example. We're starting to get towards the value proposition here, in that writing these transcripts takes a lot of your time. As the business owner you have better things to do. You kind of want to just focus on creating the content, whether that's just recording and putting the content up in Dropbox and then having you, or a service like yours, be the transcription service for that podcast.

Pat: I'm still playing Pat the person who writes and is now thinking about doing something with transcription. Brian, you're telling me transcriptions seems like a good thing. That could be my one thing. Then how would I make that a productized service if that's something I'm currently doing myself. I'm pretty good at it, that's why I'm doing it. How do I then use kind of what you teach to take myself away from that?

Brian: You really want to start to streamline and standardize this service. I actually have this 3-step process here, and it really starts with standardization. What I mean by that is making the work as predictable as possible.

We all know there are many different ways to accomplish the same task. If it's transcription writing you might write it in Microsoft Word or Google Docs or directly into WordPress or whatever you're using to write. I would suggest starting to really standardize the way that you do things. Just always use one template or one methodology, whether that's a set of tools or a certain approach.

For me when I was doing web design and then starting to standardize that, I started to focus exclusively on using WordPress. Then even beyond that I started to focus exclusively on responsive web design, mobile-optimizing using responsive web design, then using one set of software for doing that.

What that does for you as a solo consultant, maybe you already have your preferred set of tools and that's great, but you really want to make this as predictable as possible so that down the road when you do start to delegate it's just done in a very predictable way. With your first teammate you can get this into a standardized process. Then even if that person is replaced or a second person comes on-board, everything is just done the same way and it keeps it very organized. That's really the first step, is standardization.

From there we want to really streamline the way that we do things, whether that's using templates or incorporating some software tools to make things go faster, or relying on one standard framework.



Going back to your example of transcribing, maybe rather than writing it all from scratch from a completely blank page, maybe we start every transcription with a standard template that already has the formatting built-in and all we need to do is kind of swap in the new content.

The third step would be to document. This really never ends. It's an ongoing process throughout the life of the business. You want to document everything. Document things into procedures. That means literally writing down lists of the things that you're doing step-by-step. Start simple, just a quick bullet list of the overview of "Step 1, open up the Google Doc. Step 2, start to transcribe the podcast episode."

Later on as you start to do it again and again, you can go back and refine that procedure, add more detail, start to include screen shots and notations and what not, and just continuously improve that documentation so that again it makes it that much easier to hand off to someone down the road.

Pat: You want to get to the point where if a monkey could read they would be able to do it, right? You want it to be that detailed. "This is this, then this..." You want it to be that narrow and detailed, correct?

Brian: Yeah, absolutely. The way that I like to think about this and approach it is you want to put so much care and effort into these procedures, because your goal ultimately at the end of the day is to have your teammate be a total rock star at their job. You want to position your teammates for the highest level of success possible. You want to make their jobs really easy, so your job as the business owner is to do that, is to make it easy by giving them all the instruction in the world.

I think all of us can relate. If we ever started a new job and we just weren't sure what we were doing, weren't sure how to use the tools or where to start, it's just really frustrating and it's kind of intimidating. We want to remove all that friction and just make it really easy for our team.

Of course they're going to have questions and you want to refine those, and as they do have questions or as they do make a mistake or two, those are indications that something is wrong in the procedure and you need to go back and refine and kind of smooth out those kinks.



Pat: Nice. And in terms of the documentation of those processes and how you've been able to optimize and streamline everything that you do before you hand it off, do you have any specific tools or recommendations for how to best do that? Is it just simply a Google Doc or would it be something else perhaps?

Brian: We use Google Docs today. I've found that those are the easiest to share and collaborate with my team so we use Google documents for the actual procedures themselves, then we actually use a Google spreadsheet to organize all of our procedures.

Today in Restaurant Engine we have something like 50 or 60 different procedures, maybe even more than that now, so we really needed to categorize them and put them into folders and keep them all organized. Then I just give my teammates access to that entire folder of procedures.

It's even gotten to the point now where they go in and they're the ones updating the procedures and keeping them up-to-date, because now that they're doing the work on a day-to-day basis they're closer to the tasks than I am. They know the processes even better than I do at this point, so I'm constantly asking them to make those procedures.

I used to work with the team with a tool called [Sweet Process](#). That was also very effective for this.

Pat: Is that like a project management tool?

Brian: It's actually an app specifically made for documenting procedures, so that's very good. We also have an internal FAQ, and we're using WordPress for this. We found a WordPress theme that's kind of built to be a knowledgebase, and that gives us an internal collection of common customer requests or requests from leads. That's where we document everything.

There are other tools like [Help Scout](#) that we use, that also have really effective FAQ knowledgebase tools that can be really helpful for this.

Pat: We use Help Scout for Smart Podcast Player, and there's other ones out there. [Rhino Support](#) is another one, and [Zendesk](#). They all have that FAQ capability. But Sweet Process is a new one.



Mindy in [Episode 153](#) talked about something that she uses for checkboxes specifically, and tasks, a tool called [TickTick](#). That's just a really nice way to organize the steps that need to be done. For example, every time she edits an episode of AskPat she brings up this checklist on TickTick and she just goes line by line.

You might think, "Why are these things important if they're doing it all the time? They don't necessarily need to check them off," but what it does is it forces Mindy to look at this list and not have to think about what needs to be done. It's always there and it's always going to be the same.

And if somebody else were to come on and edit the show for me, they could do it really easily just by looking at those checklists and the whole procedure list, so I'm 100% on-board in terms of making sure these things are documented, standardized, and processed in that way.

I think the big question is, "Okay, if I get to a point in my hypothetical transcription potential productized service, I get these sequences down as far as how customers come in, what we do, templates and all those things, then for it to really be to a point where it's not me doing it anymore I need to find other people."

I think the big question is, Brian, what's the best way to go and do that? How can we find a perfect fit for building our team? Is that the next step or am I skipping ahead a little?

Brian: That can certainly be the next step. Again it kind of depends on what you want to do. You might not necessarily want to grow a large team, but if you do want to go that route there are a couple different ways you can go about it. It also really depends on the type of support that you need or the type of teammates that you're looking for.

In my business, Restaurant Engine, I've hired a few people to handle customer support and website work for our customers. I primarily found them on [Odesk](#) and I've managed them through Odesk. I do teach a whole process for optimizing your job ad and organizing candidates.

Pat: It's really important to do due diligence when you're hiring somebody. I've used Odesk before very successfully. I've used [Elance](#) very successfully. I've also used each of those platforms terribly by rushing into things, so I think it's great that you're teaching that too.



Brian: I do think there's a lot of trial and error with those. I've certainly had challenges and successes on those platforms for sure. Some of my teammates I've been with almost three years now, and others just started and didn't work out. It happens, but there are things that you can look out for to really make the process work for you.

I like a multilevel application, review, and interview process, starting with just the way that they email and respond to the ad, kind of evaluating how they answer questions and how fast they reply and what not. I like to do a video chat at least once when my team is overseas or across the country somewhere.

Even though on a day-to-day basis at work we don't really use video chats all that much, we're mostly communicating in [Slack](#) and email and what not, I still like to have that face-to-face at least early on to meet new teammates.

The other thing I would mention is sometimes you need to hire for specialized roles. One thing that we've done is I have a writing team that really started with one writer and now it's kind of a team of writers who just manage our blog for Restaurant Engine. For that I went to a specialized job board. I think I found them on the [Prologger.net job board](#).

There are very field-specific job boards out there, so that would be one example if you're specifically looking to hire writers or bloggers. Hiring developers you would look to places like [Authentic Jobs](#) or Odesk and Elance. If you're looking specifically for someone in WordPress there are other job boards for that as well.

Pat: Cool. This last question I asked was about adding more people to the team, but you had said that you don't necessarily need to do that and you could still have a productized service. So a productized service doesn't necessarily have to mean you have a whole team. It could just be you're standardizing these things.

I think the big part and the thing that just clicked for me is the idea that you are just focusing on this one thing, like we talked about earlier. That's what makes it a productized service because that's a product essentially that people can buy from you. They kind of know what they're going to get before you start working with them, right?

Brian: Absolutely. I like to talk about a lot of these case studies that I've done interviews with and research with. There are plenty of these productized consulting offers out there.



Pat: Can you give us some examples?

Brian: Absolutely. Nick Disabato is fairly well-known now for creating his service called [Draft Revise](#). I believe today it's still just him. Basically what he does is he just runs one A/B test on your website to increase conversions. He'll propose an A/B test to run on your website and then he'll implement it. Then taking the more successful result he'll then implement that on your website. He just does that once a month, then the next month he'll run another A/B test, then another one.

It's like a monthly retainer service, a very standardized scope, and he makes a great living at it and he loves what he does. He gets to focus on the thing that he loves doing. That's a great example.

Going back to the writing example, Philip Morgan runs a service called [My Content Sherpa](#). He focuses on technical firms and agencies, and he will write I believe 4 in-depth well-researched articles per month for your agency's website. He'll write it and then he'll help with promotion. That's just a standardized package, set scope, and kind of runs on a retainer model.

Pat: That's cool. Let's get into the marketing and sales and pricing of the standardized productized service now. Is it typically a monthly retainer that's kind of what we're looking at here?

Brian: That is typical and it's very attractive because you have the ongoing recurring and the predictability of income. It kind of gets us away from that feast and famine cycle that most freelancers face, but again there are alternatives.

I also look at what Jarrod Drysdale has done. He launched a site called [LandingPageInADay.com](#) and it's exactly what it sounds like. He'll design a landing page and he'll write the copy for it, one landing page, and he does it all in one day. You just go on his site and you purchase your one day.

It's like a one-time purchase, and it goes into a form and you schedule your day in his calendar, then they kind of fit you in. I think he's actually had more than enough demand at this point that I think they closed it down and he has a waiting list, but it just goes to show.



Again that's one of those things that I believe he launched it in a weekend. He just kind of put up his own landing page for the service, sent it out to a few people in his networks, and I think he had 7 paying clients in a week. It's just very focused. It does one thing extremely well, solves one problem, and it really works out.

Pat: That's really cool. I'm just thinking out loud here. What if there was a service that I could pay every month for example \$X, and they would have all the show notes done for all of my podcasts?

Now obviously I have a team that does that for me already, but I'm pretty sure something like that could work out really well. I'm just thinking of things that are hot items right now, and podcasting is obviously one of them – so podcast editing, to the show notes, to even just pulling out the links from the transcription to have those be clickable.

There's all these little things that I can imagine people paying for for a small monthly fee. It's definitely worth people's money to save that kind of time for sure.

Brian: Absolutely. Speaking of podcasting, I co-host a podcast called [Bootstrapped Web](#) with my friend Jordan Gal, and actually we're now bringing on an editor who's starting to offer his own productized service as a podcast editing service. We're actually just phasing this in right now. That's Craig Hewitt at [Podcastmotor.com](#).

I've seen a few of these pop up, podcast editing as a service. That's a great, great example of a productized service. I've been thinking that someone should do this for a long time, and I'm glad a few people are doing it. Basically we're now recording our weekly episodes and dropping our recordings in Dropbox, and Craig and his system basically just takes them from there. He'll go and edit them and put them up in our WordPress site and set everything up for us.

Pat: That's really cool. I have a person who edits my show who works with me, but he also does this for other people too. If you go to my Resource page at [SmartPassiveIncome.com/resources](#) you'll see him there. [Twentyfoursound.com](#) is the company. It's awesome and it's definitely like that.

If one already exists for a productized service that you're thinking of creating, it doesn't mean that you can't come in and also join the party. There's a lot of different ways to stand out and offer different kinds of services or different add-ons or additions to what might already exist out there.



If somebody is really thinking about this or really getting excited, is there a way to sort of validate that this is going to work before putting a lot of time, money, and resources into it? You said Dan started in 7 days and these other ones started over a weekend. Is it as simple as maybe just putting up a landing page saying what you're thinking of doing and just putting up ads for it perhaps?

Brian: That is a great question. I think that going this route of a productized service in itself is a much faster and more seamless way to launch something, and you can do it very quickly.

In and of itself you're not investing a whole lot of time early on, and it actually allows you to get an offer in front of clients and actually get paying clients and start delivering the service in as fast as a week. It depends what you're doing, but I've seen plenty of examples like Dan Norris and a few others who've launched something like this in a week.

It's probable that nothing is going to work out exactly as planned from Day 1, but you're going to get that feedback loop. You're going to learn so much just in the very first few times that you deliver the service, and then you can go back and start to refine things and tweak. Maybe that's tweaking your pricing or maybe that's tweaking what's included in the scope of your service or the way that you talk about it, the way you position it.

These are all things that can happen much faster than if you were to go and build an iPhone app or a software as a service. These things take months to build and to validate, not to say that you shouldn't strive for doing that at some point if you want to, but I do see productized services as a faster way to get to that end goal.

Pat: Nice. If I have a productized service, how am I getting paid? I know when you're a freelancer you might just simply invoice your client through Freshbooks or something like that. Is it different? You're collecting a payment up front. What services are you using to do that and how are you billing each month if you're on a sort of recurring retainer? Talk about that a little bit.

Brian: Sure. Actually, before I get into the actual mechanics of billing I would say one thing about pricing with a productized service, and this is where it really starts to differ from a traditional model of freelancing and billing by the hour. With a productized



service it's offered at a set price and scope. Most of the time that price is actually shown right on the website, however you kind of present it.

I do recommend showing the price on the website. What that does is it kind of removes the whole price and negotiation conversation from the table because it just is what it is. That's what the product is. It costs this much. It delivers this value. It's just like purchasing any other product that you would buy on Amazon or at the store or whatever, so it removes that negotiation from the table.

Before with the freelance model or the hourly model I would constantly get into these conversations with clients around, "How many hours is this going to take? What is this going to be?" Then once they see the final quote then they start negotiating around, "What can we trim out of the scope to make this cheaper?" back and forth, and then nothing is in anyone's best interest. The client is starting to get less and I'm starting to make less and it's really frustrating.

In contrast, if you're offering a high-value service positioned as a product – for example conversion optimization working with one particular type of client, proven case studies that show that you've been able to increase conversions on average by 20% for your other clients and this is how much it costs – then the only question from there is whether you the customer are the right fit for this service or not.

There are going to be plenty of visitors and customers that are not the right fit, but there are going to be a few that are a perfect fit, and that's who you want to be focusing on.

Getting back to your question about billing, there are a number of ways you can go about it. Typically for the one-off services or really any service I like to do some kind of up-front payment, whether that's paying for the first month up-front, or if it's a one-off service just paying outright for the one-time service to book it on the calendar or whatever it is. You can set that up with a few tools on your website, or you can simply still send an invoice.

Going back a few years I used to use Freshbooks to run invoices, but these days as a productized service it can be as quick and easy as a PayPal button, or you can set up [Gumroad](#), which is typically used for selling digital download products, but that's also a way to put a Buy Now button on your website.



There are a few WordPress plugins that allow you to connect [Stripe](#) for accepting payments, which can also be very useful if you're doing subscription retainer models, having them subscribe via Stripe and have their credit card on file. That makes it a lot easier and very effective.

Pat: Very cool. Thanks for that. What are some of the big mistakes that people who are going down this route make? Maybe you've made them yourself or you've seen other people like some of your students make them? What should we avoid?

Brian: I think #1 you really want to be focusing on a high-value service, and by that I mean something that clients are really willing to pay for. You won't necessarily find that right out of the gate. Sometimes it takes a few iterations and refinements, but it does require you to put an offer out there and get it in front of customers and get their feedback, just really focusing in on that value proposition.

The other thing is not to kind of shy away from doing things manually. At the core this is all about is doing things manually. You look at a service like podcast editing, for instance, and there is a lot of work that goes into that – taking down the audio, putting it into your audio software and editing out the um's and the uh's and what not, putting in the compression effects on and then exporting and uploading to the site. There's a lot of manual tasks that go into that, and that can kind of scare us off. "Oh, it's way too much work."

But if you go into it thinking, "Okay, I'm just going to do this myself early on, with the goal being I'm going to streamline and systemize and standardize everything, to the point that I can start to bring on a team and they can just fit into this system that I've built," that's the ultimate goal. Yes, it will take a little bit of time and plenty of work, but don't turn your back on these manual services. You can still scale it up by focusing on these systems.

Pat: Nice. Thank you for that. This is really an important conversation. I think a lot of people are going to benefit from this. Perhaps some lives will be changed as a result of this because this isn't really something that's talked about very much, so I appreciate you coming on and really owning this space as somebody who's teaching other people how to do these productized services. Thank you for all you've shared today for free here on the podcast.



You're also giving away something else for free, which is really cool, a cheat sheet. Why don't you talk about that really quick? For those of you listening, you can find that at smartpassiveincome.com/productize.

Brian: I was just really excited to connect with your audience here, so I did put together a special cheat sheet just for the SPI audience here. What this is is 10 specific changes that you can start making today. Some are kind of mindset stuff and some are really more actionable things that you can start working on to begin productizing what you do, and to just really get those wheels turning and kind of get rolling on this stuff. It's about 3-4 pages long and it's kind of a guide.

Pat: That cheat sheet again can be found at <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/productize>. I've already actually talked about you, Brian, to a few of my audience members who I saw at a recent convention, and they were really excited about what you had to offer. They actually want to get into your course right away, and I wanted to have them wait because I told them that you said you were going to give us a special deal.

If anybody is interested, whether it's now or you go through the cheat sheet and you still want more, I feel like a lot of people could take the information on this podcast and already get started, which is great. But if you're looking for more, Brian is offering a course as well. It's called [Productize](#) and there's a discount code, is that correct?

Brian: Yeah, absolutely. At this point we've had a couple hundred students go through the course and we've been getting some really great feedback. Just for the SPI audience right now, if you use the offer code `spi2015` you can get 25% off any of the packages for Productize, and that's good now through the end of this year 2015.

Pat: Thanks for doing that. Like I said, I feel like a lot of people can take the information here already and run with it, but you have a full-blown course on this stuff and it seems like there's a lot more to it too, so go ahead and check that out. The coupon code again is `spi2015`.

Brian, if people just want to learn more about you, where can we find you?

Brian: My site is Casjam.com. That's where I write about this stuff. I mentioned the free cheat sheet and that's just for SPI, but I also have a free email crash course about productizing there, and the Productize course is at Casjam.com/productize. I'm casjam



on Twitter, and if anyone has any questions and wants to reach out, you can always reach me at brian@casjam.com.

Pat: Awesome. Thank you so much, Brian. This has been fantastic. Man, this is going to be awesome, so thanks so much and we'll see how everybody goes with your information.

Brian: Thanks, Pat. This was great.

Pat: Thanks, take care.

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I hope you enjoyed that interview with Brian Casel from Productize and Casjam.com. This is Episode 158 so you can download and get the show notes and the transcript over at smartpassiveincome.com/session158.

If you're interested in Brian's course on productizing your service-based business, go to smartpassiveincome.com/productize and you'll get your SPI cheat sheet there, which will give you 10 small changes that you can make today to productize what you do. The he's also offering a cool 25% discount for the rest of 2015. Just use spi2015 for the discount if you're going to get any of his things. Again you can download the cheat sheet for free at smartpassiveincome.com/productize.

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If you go to 99designs.com/spi you're going to get a Power Pack of services worth \$99 for free, which will give you a little bit more exposure for the next design project that you have there. Again that's 99designs.com/spi.

Thanks again so much. I really appreciate you listening in. Next week in Episode 159 you're going to hear somebody who has helped a previous guest on the show make a lot more money through their email list. We're going to have this person on to tell us how we can increase the sales with our autoresponder series even more, and all the best practices for email marketing as well.

I look forward to seeing you next week. Make sure to subscribe and leave a review on iTunes. That's really helpful. Thanks and take care.

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

Links and Resources Mentioned in This Episode:

Brian Casel's links:

Casjam.com

[Cheat Sheet](#) for today's podcast

[Productize](#) course: use coupon code spi2015

Email: brian@casjam.com



[Restaurant Engine](#)
[HotelPropeller.com](#)
[Bootstrapped Web podcast](#)

Other Resources:

[WP Curve](#)
[Smart Passive Income Episode 134](#) – Common WordPress Mistakes with Dan Norris
[Sweet Process](#)
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[Smart Passive Income Episode 153](#) – Systematizing and Productive Workflow with Mindy Holahan
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