



**SPI Podcast Session #171–  
A Crash Course on Copywriting  
With Nikki Elledge Brown**

Show notes: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/episode171>

This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session #171.

**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, he called underwear 'skivvies' for the first 10 years of his life, Pat Flynn!

**Pat:** What's up everybody? Welcome to Session 171 of the Smart Passive Income podcast. I hope you enjoyed that little rap I had in the beginning which, yes, I did create on my own and, yes, it was absolutely cheesy but that's who I am. Hopefully you feel I get sharp on the microphone, know what I'm saying? Probably not, but anyway it's okay.

The reason for that is because we're speaking with Nikki Elledge Brown who is the Communication Stylist. That's what she calls herself and I love that. She's going to help us with wordsmithing, with copywriting, how to understand exactly what to say to best portray who you are and what you're trying to do and the actions your audience is trying to take on your website or on your podcast or wherever you're out online.

Without further ado we're just going to dive right into this amazing interview. A lot of people had actually requested Nikki to come on the show. I'd never really heard of her until I started to hear her name over and over and over again, and after this interview now I completely understand why because Nikki is awesome. She's so fun and genuine and really sweet to talk to, so here's Nikkie Elledge Brown from [NikkiElledgeBrown.com](http://NikkiElledgeBrown.com).

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**Pat:** What's up everybody? Pat Flynn here. I'm so excited to welcome Nikki Elledge Brown from [NikkiElledgeBrown.com](http://NikkiElledgeBrown.com) to the show. Nikki, how are you? Welcome to the show!

**Nikki:** I'm doing great! Thank you so much for having me.



**Pat:** Thank you for being here. I'm really excited because, as a lot of you who are listening to this know, I recently got back from a trip to Ghana through Pencils of Promise, and I was on your site, Nikki, and I saw on the Giving Back tab that you've done some work with Pencils of Promise as well, which is really cool. What did you do exactly with them?

**Nikki:** Yes, and honestly I need to update that page because we finished funding our first school with Pencils of Promise with a mega-launch we had in August of 2014. We chose Guatemala just because with our lifestyle that's probably most realistic for where we'd be able to visit one day. We finished building it in February and I just got the first pictures of the school a couple weeks ago in I think it's Santa Marta, Guatemala, so I'm so excited, and I loved seeing your video from Ghana. That was amazing.

**Pat:** Thank you so much. It's such a fantastic organization so it was really cool to see that you do that, too, and more people doing that as well. Can you tell everybody else out there who's listening what is it that you do?

**Nikki:** In addition to being a proud military wife and mom of a little dude, and by the time this episode airs I will have shared that we're expecting another little one...

**Pat:** Congratulations!

**Nikki:** Thank you! 12 weeks today and we just saw a sneak peek this morning, so we're super excited and thankful for that.

Basically I made up the title Communication Stylist for myself when I was just starting just over two years ago, because I was trying to think, "How can I describe what I can help people with? Because if it has to do with connecting words and people I can help." It's not necessarily just writing or just speaking or just editing or anything. I can just help encourage people to bring out the best of who they really are when it comes to their words.

Just like a stylist doesn't want to change who you are or make you feel uncomfortable and say something you wouldn't say or wear something you wouldn't wear, they just want to highlight the best parts of you, that's what I like to help people do with their words and with their communication.

Most specifically in the first couple years of my business it has been a heavy focus on writing, but that's just one tiny tip of the iceberg, a tiny slice of the pie of what I'd love to help people with.



**Pat:** I love what you say here on the front page of your site. You say, "I'm not a wardrobe stylist; however, I'm a worddrobe stylist."

**Nikki:** Yeah, total word nerd there.

**Pat:** Where can we all start in terms of better improving our copywriting, our wordsmithing? It's such a challenge for so many people. I remember when I first started it was so hard for me to write. It was so hard for me to just figure out what to put on the keyboard and on the screen.

It was only through just forcing myself to do it that I eventually figured it out and have gotten comfortable with it, but is there anything people can do to kind of get comfortable with it and kind of find their voice much faster?

**Nikki:** My goal honestly is to kind of dissolve the wall that we all want to put between copywriting and making a big deal of it, because then we psych ourselves out before we even start. The whole blinking cursor on the blank screen thing freaks a lot of people out, and it's normal because people all the sudden go back to English class or whatever your last writing experience was. You have all these rules and all these voices in your head and it's hard to just shut them out and find your own, but it's there.

Honestly, I didn't even know copywriting with a 'w' was a word until just a couple months before starting my business. I didn't consider it a thing. It was just like, "Well, we're just trying to showcase who you are, to show up on the page."

I like to help people think of it as it's just sharing your message. You're just letting your voice that you would be telling and sharing to somebody in the grocery store, let's get that onto the page in the clearest most sincere way possible and then good stuff can happen. Because if you're showing up and you don't sound like yourself, then that's definitely not helping attract the right people to your business.

I like alliteration so I have four C's that we can share that will be easy for people to remember hopefully. The first thing is to be clear. Clever wit – that's great, everybody feels like they want to be witty. I'm like it really doesn't matter because really the very first most important thing is you have to be clear. People have to literally understand what you're saying.



In terms of being clear, just think about using simple words. You don't have to go the thesaurus to find a fancy-pants word if you can say something simpler for people to make it easy to understand.

Use simple sentences, especially when you're writing online, just keeping it short. Instead of a longer sentence of two, just split that baby in half and make it one simple sentence. Same with paragraphs. People like to scan and we get that subconscious sense of accomplishment when we're going down the page like, "Ooo, look at me! I'm already half way down," even if it's the exact same number of words.

Then being credible, which does come with competence and your value and your experience whenever you communicate, just like you do, Pat. I think your signature move is that people know, like, and trust you really easily because you're so transparent, you have nothing to hide, and you've made that obvious from the beginning.

I think a lot of people tend to think, "I have to be this way in business and this way in life," but you see the people who are doing really well when you feel that synchronicity and you get the feeling that if you met this person at the grocery store they would talk to you just the same as they're talking to you in their copy or on their podcast, and that's huge.

Then one that I love to share is be conversational. As long as you're clear and as long as you're credible and we believe you, we don't think you're a slimeball, then yeah, play with it and be conversational. Style up your words. Play with bold and italics. I talk about it's like accessorizing your wardrobe.

I like to encourage people to take the BFF test and just read something out loud, like if you read it to your spouse or your friend and you feel like a total goonburger when you say it out loud, that's probably a sign to kind of go back and revamp it a little bit. Regardless of what the formula says or what so and so recommended, if it's really not something you would say, there's kind of an energy behind that.

Then on that woo-woo note, just about being connected, so be clear, be credible, be conversational, and be connected. Just be mindful of the purpose of what you're sharing. How do you want people to feel? What do you want them to know? How do you want to show up? How do you want to be perceived? Then how can you make sure that's actually what's happening, by getting feedback from people.

So those are the four C's. Those are the basics I would call writing for dream clients.



**Pat:** I love that a lot, especially the part about being conversational. A lot of people know in my emails and my copy and my blog posts it's just like I'm talking, and that was a big mindset shift for me. It was stop trying to write like my 7<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher told me to write with the thesis paragraph. No, if I were to give my blog posts to my English teacher she'd probably give me an F, right?

**Nikki:** Right. You can use contractions if that's how you would say it. You can have a one-word sentence, which isn't really a sentence, but that's fine because that's the goal. I like to tell people you want to help people hear you before they hire you.

In my story and my background, I had over 90 people pay me hundreds of dollars to work with me in my second month of business and they had never met me. I think I had a couple of videos out there but it was basically 100% through my copy and just showing up and writing like I actually speak, so that was really, really powerful.

**Pat:** That's fantastic. On the front page of your site here it says, "Ok. Sooo I'm not a wardrobe stylist. (FACT: I spend most days in pajama pants.) I AM, however, a WORDROBE stylist." Just with that, you get so much of your personality out of those three little sentences right there on your home page. It's so smart. I love that.

Another question that came up in my head while you were talking is this idea of, like you said, being your authentic self, being you. How much does who your audience is play a role in that, and is there a line or how much does your audience and the people who are reading the content matter?

For example, an extreme example is I might be myself, but if my audience are people who are just rocket scientists in space, they might not kind of enjoy the way I talk from myself. Does that make sense?

**Nikki:** Yes, and hopefully you're not in a business where people don't enjoy who you actually are, because that's my thing. You don't want to have to show up one way in your writing, and then whenever you're actually engaging with your clients and customers you're like, "Wait, how was I pretending to be whenever I did that?"

It's kind of like online dating when people have the profile picture that's 20 years old, and then you meet in person and you're like, "Eww." I feel awkward and uncomfortable because I'm not living up to your expectation, and then you feel like I deceived you, which is not a good start to any relationship, so that's why I just feel like the right people will totally appreciate you for who you are. I just believe that really passionately.



Going back to my first 8 months in business I worked with over 160 people one on one just for one-off one-hour sessions, but 99% of them we had such a great time. It was basically a one-sided blind date because I had never met them. They could just go to my website and sign up for a session and then here we go!

I thought that was so cool, and I feel like again just with friends and family you would want to hang out with. That's why the whole idea of the dream client and customer is really important to me because I feel like you shouldn't have to feel like you need to put on an air or put on a front.

Even if you have a product-based business and it's not like your personality is the business, still people want to know there's a person behind the business. We don't want it to just seem like it's this factory or machine and there's no real person behind it. That's why even big brands like to add in personalities, so I don't think you can really lose by showing up as you actually are.

**Pat:** Right, and you'll attract the right kind of people for you if you are yourself. I totally agree with that.

Who was Nikki before she was the Communication Stylist?

**Nikki:** Tired. [laughing] I'm still tired, especially tired in the first trimester. My background in a coconut shell, as I like to say, is I have two degrees in communication studies. My Bachelors I finished in three years at TCU in Ft. Worth – Go Frogs – and then I was offered a scholarship. They actually offered to pay me to stick around and get my Masters, and I was only 20 so I was like, "Yes, please. I don't want to leave here yet. I don't know what I want to do," so I stuck around and I taught our entry-level communication course at TCU. I loved teaching. I just loved facilitating those light bulb moments.

I got engaged to my middle-school sweetheart after we had had some time apart. He's in the Navy. All the way back to 8<sup>th</sup> grade and braces, so you know that's true love. He has seen me at my worst, for sure. So we got married in the fall of 2008, but in-between my graduating in May and then fall, I taught at a community college here in my hometown in Texas, and then moved across the rainbow and I started teaching.

I always wanted to keep my finger on teaching, so I started facilitating courses with the University of Phoenix just in case I wanted to go back to a community college. I also worked at a technology marketing company for about a year. It was my first job and I



didn't love it. I actually quit four months in because I just couldn't do it. It was like inside sales where you have a headset and you're standing up all day in a room, and I just missed people.

When people would come in for interviews and I got to tell them where the rest room was I was like, "Ahhhh!" I just missed interacting with people so I quit. Somehow four months in I was able to say, "I'd rather make no money than continue doing what I'm doing." My boss was like, "Oh, I don't want to lose you," so he created a new position and I stuck around for a year. Then I decided to let it to go.

Then I went to visit the Arizona memorial at Pearl Harbor on my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and I thought, "This would be a really cool place to volunteer." I had met one of the survivors who comes twice a year. Well, he did. Unfortunately I think he passed away last year, but I met him and I thought, "This would be such a cool place to volunteer," so I just started volunteering there just because. Then that ended up turning into a job for three years that I continued until just after the first few months of my business.

I was a park ranger, so if you all go, whenever you visit Hawaii or if you've been since 2010, 1.8 million visitors a year will have seen me to welcome them and then ask them to silence their cell phones while they watch the video before they head out to the Arizona memorial.

So it was part-time teaching, part-time park rangering after my little guy was born, and then I started my business in the beginning of 2013.

**Pat:** That's very cool. First of all, I thank your husband for his service, and thank you for being a military wife and mom. So when you started your business you said that it was essentially your copywriting and the way you wordsmith things that kind of helped you get started. How did you get an audience and traffic when you just started out doing what you're doing now?

**Nikki:** It was an interesting evolution, just to back up a little bit, because I wasn't looking to start a business necessarily. At the beginning of 2013 I knew my husband was about to spend more than half of the year away on the other side of the country and I didn't want to be like a total basket case while he was gone and I'm raising our 18-month-old by myself.

My sister had forwarded me an email about choosing a word of the year instead of a resolution, and I chose faith so that I could, as I like to say, store up my spiritual nuts



for winter and kind of get rooted in what wouldn't change. I started waking up before the guys and I would go downstairs and have a little devotional time and quiet time.

When I finally took that time to reflect – you're a parent so you know you just wake up and, unless you're very intentional about it, it's very easy to just wake up to the baby monitor when someone's screaming and needs you, so it's such a change of pace. I finally started to see these divine breadcrumbs that had been leading to a path the whole time.

I had been writing a blog just for fun for family and friends called *StoriesFromAScreensaver*, and people would comment and be like, "Nikki, when are you going to write a book? I love everything that you write." Or thinking back to the fact that whenever I was at Pearl Harbor and they just asked me to do this video that they knew millions of people would see every year, and I was just a volunteer at the time, I wasn't even an employee – little nudges, and I felt like God was knocking me on the head like, "Okay dude, I gave you these gifts. Are you going to share them in a bigger way?"

This was when my cousin, Dave Curley, told me about this podcast called Smart Passive Income. He'll be so excited. So I started to kind of see there was a whole world out there or in there on the laptop of people doing stuff, so I started to explore. Is it going to be a blog or a podcast, or is it a book or a business? Then I had to really think. "Okay, who's going to pay me for help with communication?" because I could help anybody with anything, like I said, so what's it going to be.

Then when I started to explore these communities of entrepreneurs and people who worked online I saw this is an absolute very necessary piece of the puzzle. I mean I'm biased, but to me it's the most important piece because you can have all these ideas stuck in your head, but if you don't know how to communicate your value then you're stuck before you start.

They self-selected it because I did some free sessions at the very beginning. I was in some Facebook groups that had beaucoups of entrepreneurs who needed help with this and I offered some free sessions and they were all over it. It was very instant. I had all these things that I could help them with, but it was like "Copy, copy, copy, copy."

It was so obvious that that's what they needed help with and then that really dictated the first two years of my business from there. I did the one-on-one's and then turned that into a course, but they just kind of told me.





Once I found them and I saw, "Okay, entrepreneurs can pay. They can actually pay. I can help a friend write an otherwise awkward email to her mother-in-law or something, but would just regular people pay for that help? I don't know. Entrepreneurs, they have their booties on the line. They need help now and yesterday."

**Pat:** Very cool. Thank you for that rundown. That's an amazing story and it's really cool to see where you've ended up.

Now let's get into some more tips and stuff for everybody out there listening. One thing that's helped me with my blog post writing and even book writing as well is when I get to that blank cursor on the screen, thinking about the structure of what I want to do, almost thinking backwards from where I want to end up.

Do you have any tips on that? Yes, the wordsmithing is important and speaking clearly and being conversational is obviously very important, but do you also have any tips for structuring something like a blog post, for example?

**Nikki:** Yes, absolutely, and that's really what I'm all about is the recipe. Because I don't want to tell you what words to use, but I can totally tell you, "Here's a recipe and here's kind of an order and a scaffolding that you can hang your words on, to where it will actually make sense." I'm really big on that because that is the overwhelming piece.

Specifically for blog posts, for example, I'm actually looking because I have my course copy cheat sheet – again, there's no one right way to do any of it, which is why it's so freaking overwhelming for people because it's a social science, not rocket science so there's no one right or wrong way – but in general a good flow would be to start with your introduction, to have some kind of attention getter.

I recommend that any time, whether it's a blog post, About page, or sales page. It's some kind of attention getter that's using their words to describe whatever you're about to go into, specifically if it's your About page or something.

In a blog post, though, you can have some kind of brief relevant story that then is going to tie into whatever you're about to talk about later, and then I do think it's really good to have a very clear line that says, "This is what we're going to talk about." We don't want to make people guess. We don't want them to have that micro anxiety of, "Oh, where are we going?"



When you're listening to a speaker you feel so much more comfortable and more at ease when they walk you through, "Here's exactly what we're going to talk about. We're going to talk about this, this, this, and this. Oh look, we talked about this."

I don't know who said the original quote but it's like, "Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them. Then tell them what you told them." As an audience it's just really helpful and we just feel like, "Ah, great, you're leading us," and that's exactly how we want to feel.

It's the same thing with the blog post. You have your attention getter, something that makes them want to read it. Obviously that first sentence is what's going to get them to read the second sentence and so forth and so on. Then tell them the main purpose or promise of the post, then exactly what you'll cover, then the nugget.

That's where you actually include the teaching, the main content organized with your sub-headings however you're going to organize it, whether it's one main point or two main points or three or however many you go. Obviously again we have shorter attention spans these days. Then in your conclusion just be careful to make sure you summarize whatever you told them, and I think it's really great to have a call to action, whatever it's going to be.

I like to call it homework because I'm not shy about the fact that of course with copy the branding is all about school because I love school. I'm a total nerd and so are my dreamies. We love school supplies so we're down with a little bit of homework, but I think just give people something really specific to do at the end.

And this goes for everything, whether you're writing an email or a blog post or any kind of page, is to end with something that they can actually do, as opposed to just, "Here's all this information. See ya," and they're like, "Okay, squirrel!" and then they're on to the next thing. Give some kind of clear reason why they want to read. It catches their attention. Tell them what you're going to tell them. Then tell them. Then tell them what you told them.

Then the conclusion and give them some good homework that they can take away and get their value and be like, "Look how helpful that was. I'm so glad I read that. I'm totally going to subscribe or I'm totally coming back next week" or whatever it is.

**Pat:** Do you have any tips on that call to action at the end where you're trying to get them to do something? Are there any special words or special lead-ins to, "Hey, here's what you've got to do. Go and do it now"?



**Nikki:** I'm not too obsessive over specific words, but to be honest – this is not just so much my approach in terms of split testing and things. My business has been built on a very qualitative scale so far, but I'm working on the quantitative piece. The main thing I think is just to make sure it's really clear.

For those scanners and people who are just kind of looking over things quickly, make sure you format it in such a way that it is really clear and they can easily see, "Bottom line what's my key takeaway? What do I need to do with this piece of information?" so just make sure it's clearly labeled, whether it's "Homework" or "Your next steps" or whatever it is.

You don't want to confuse them too much. You don't want to add too many calls to action and then people are like, "Ah, forget that. That's way too much," so if you can just focus on one thing. Sometimes that gets confusing because you're like, "Okay, do I ask them to comment? Do I ask them to share the post? What do I do?"

For me personally I just have the Homework section. That's always expected that there's like one thing that I'm asking them to do in the comments, and then I always have a P.S. after my signature that's like, "If you like this post please share it," so you can kind of do both without throwing them all in the pot and confusing everybody.

**Pat:** I like that. I'm on one of your blog posts right now and it says literally "Your homework: In the comments below share what is one totally achievable baby step you will take today to start or keep building momentum." It's very, very clear. There's a section you can't miss.

Oftentimes people do include the call to actions like we're all taught to do, but it's just at the end of their last paragraph, which was about something else, or it's not really noted or visible, so I think this is really smart.

**Nikki:** Thanks. I just want to make it easy.

**Pat:** What about for sales copy? This is something that a lot of us who are coming out with products or perhaps we have books coming out – what can we do on a page where the call to action is to buy something? How do we get people excited about buying that thing?

**Nikki:** Just as an overview I think there are four main things that we're all looking for whenever we go to a page, regardless of the order in the recipe and how you mix it up



or change it and flip it around. Again it goes back to the four C's I was talking about earlier.

First you want to make sure there's clear value. Of course the baseline is you have to make sure it's clear that this is something that they want or need, so the value has to be there. You literally have to have enough information so that they can see, "Oh, this is what I want."

Whether that's painting the before and after picture, which is probably the best thing, so it's like, "You're here. You want to be here. Oh snap, I've got something that will help you get there. That's perfect! I'm so glad you're here."

Credibility is big, too, on your sales page. You can't just assume that people already know you and they already know you have X years of experience or this is your particular niche and expertise. You want to make sure that it's clear just in case they haven't met you yet.

Literally on my Course About Copy sales page it says, "In case we haven't met yet," and I have a little micro version of my About page, leading into why I created A Course About Copy, just because you don't want to be presumptuous and think, "Of course you know who I am and why you should buy from me." So clear value and that credibility again.

Then clear expectations are huge on a sales page. Again, whenever I was just starting out and the only way to work with me was to sign up for a one-on-one session, I made it very clear, "This is how you do it. This is what's going to happen. This is what we're going to cover before the session and during the session and after the session." I just wanted to ease any of those doubts.

On a sales page for your book or your program or whatever it is, that's why you have those Frequently Asked Questions. Once you've shared all of these things you've given them one opportunity to buy or your button or whatever it is, then I call that piece after the first opportunity to buy, if people weren't quite ready yet, ease the doubts.

What else can you do to answer the questions that they might have, to add more social proof and testimonials and make sure they know that real people are getting real results and you're not just pretending, and we're just hoping for the best and crossing our fingers?



So as much as you can, ease the doubts and then make sure you then include – after you’ve gone to all that trouble of easing their doubts – again make it easy and add that final nudge and add another button.

I cringe when I see people who have done these amazing things anticipating people’s questions, but then there’s no call to action again at the bottom. It sounds kind of crazy. It’s like, “They’ll just scroll right back up,” but maybe they won’t. You don’t know what else is going on in their house or who’s screaming and needs dinner and they were just kind of looking real quick, so just make it easy. Make sure once you’ve done that work to add another opportunity to click.

So clear value, credibility, clear expectations, and then that missing piece is just again it’s that personality and intuition and making sure, “Yeah, I get a good vibe from this person and I really like his energy, or I really like how she teaches things.” That’s just kind of the X factor that people will know when they see it, or they won’t.

**Pat:** That’s awesome. I love the four C’s. Does that have anything to do with the four C’s like with a diamond?

**Nikki:** No, but it totally can if you want.

**Pat:** I bet you could make it. Clear value, that’s the clarity. Credibility, doesn’t make the cut. Conversational, like how heavy is it, what’s the carat. Then the character of it, maybe the color. I don’t know, I’m just making that up.

**Nikki:** Yeah, it could make a really pretty slide. Character is important. Again that’s the personality and intuition, and there’s no hiding. Again we put ourselves out there and that’s just the thing. It is about transparency and making sure that you can trust someone.

It really is crazy to think about. I just went to Dallas a few weeks ago. I was speaking at Off the Charts Live and I met so many people that I had known online for the last two years but I just hadn’t met them in real life. It’s so funny and so crazy how much we get to know each other, and know and like and trust and invest in each other, but we’ve never met in real life.

The only way that that’s possible is by being clear and sincere in our communication with each other. That’s how we’re getting to know each other, so it’s not any different when it’s a sales page or an About page or a blog post.



**Pat:** That's why I love the podcast so much. It's real easy to just be myself. I mean I can't hide, I can't edit. I mean I can edit, but it's not like a blog post where I can just really really craft something or even have somebody else do something for me, when nobody would even know. This is my voice, this is your voice, this is who we are.

That's why a lot of people who I meet at conferences, they hear the podcast and they tell me that they feel like they know me already, and I'm like, "What was your name?" It's really cool so I love that.

You also mentioned about having parts in your sales page or with whatever you're doing, thinking about what the naysayers will say, what the haters will say, or those people who have questions, what will they ask, and actually putting that in there already before they even ask, so they know that you're already thinking about it.

I believe it was Malcolm Gladwell who does this with his books. He always writes these amazing books that are semi-controversial potentially, and he thinks about what the haters will say and he actually writes chapters specifically just for them in mind, which is really cool. So when they say, "Well, what about this?" then "Here's a whole chapter about that, sorry," and that sort of thing. Including those things on your sales page is a smart thing I've seen people do, too.

What are some of the most common mistakes that people who are in the online space that we're in are making when it comes to their communication, and how can they improve?

**Nikki:** I think one of the biggest things is just trying too hard to have a certain personality that's not really yours. I think people can just tell. I think a lot of people, whether you cuss or not in your real life – and that's fine, whatever you choose to do – but I feel like a lot of people try to be really cool. What I like to say is you're not trying to be cool, you're trying to be yourself, so it's totally fine.

I call it the word police because sometimes people will ban words and it's like, "Oh my gosh, people don't say awesome sauce anymore. I'm so embarrassed for you," and I'm like "That's fine. Let them say it. If they would say it in their real life, then let them say it."

But again it always come with the caveat that clear is more important, and clear beats clever every day of the week, so don't try to be so engaging and witty and la-la-la that we don't even know what the heck you're saying, because that's not serving anybody.



**Pat:** Do the same rules apply for blog post titles, for the names of products, for the names of podcast episodes, for the names of domains, for example that clever is fun but can also just mess things up too?

**Nikki:** Yes, and again this is where it's clear that I'm not like old-school copywrite-trained or whatever, because I knew there are such really amazing resources like Copyblogger and Jon Morrow's [Headline Hacks](#). These are tested over the last 100 years, these headline formats, and that's fine and great and they work, so you can't argue with that.

But if I feel personally when I'm typing my email or I'm publishing a blog post and I'm using a formula and it just feels a little cheesy to me or it just feels like, "No, I wouldn't say that" then I don't.

Again I'm non-traditional in that sense because to me it's just like, "It's okay. I've done very well for myself and I've never had a viral blog post. It's okay." I feel like sometimes we put way too much pressure on ourselves for those things.

And I do have a link I can share with you because I did write a blog post on it once upon a time for Natalie MacNeil at She Takes On The World. It's just one of those things. Don't let yourself get overwhelmed about it and think, "Aahh! If I don't have the right headline..."

One of my biggest messages that I really want to make sure to share while I have this opportunity is it doesn't need to be perfect, it just needs to be shared. Unless you're building a car seat. That needs to be perfect, but when it comes to blog posts it really doesn't.

You have to define what good enough is, or what really good is for you, so that you can feel good about it. I'm not saying just put stuff that's kind of meh out there. Put good stuff out there, but for the most part really good is good enough. You can always go back and tweak it later. It's not written in stone, it's HTML, so if you didn't like that headline two weeks from now or two years from now, go back and change it, it's no big deal.

It's important to think about the people who are reading it and think about what they would open, but I honestly just see a lot of people using that as an excuse like, "Oh, I can't. I don't know what the perfect headline is going to be." If you have time to split test, great for you, but that's just not the road I've been able to go down just yet.



**Pat:** I love it. I think you mentioned before we started recording that you had a link to share that had some additional resources for everybody?

**Nikki:** Oh yeah, I've got plenty, links for days I can share with you.

**Pat:** Okay, so we'll have all that in the show notes available for you guys. And after we hang up here I'll give the direct link to a place on your site where people can go to get more information, right?

**Nikki:** Yeah, and since we have a little time I'll put everything that we talked about today into a nice PDF and it'll just be at [nikkiledgebrown.com/spi](http://nikkiledgebrown.com/spi), so we'll have that ready for you all whenever it's time.

**Pat:** Okay, and the link to that will be in the show notes.

Nikki, one final selfish question because I'm in the middle of writing books right now, and a lot of people know that it's something that doesn't come easy for me. A blog post I can write 5,000 words in a few hours, but a book for whatever reason just is much more difficult, and I know this is the case for a lot of other people too. Do you have any tips for book writers out there who are trying to get their words and their brain into a book?

**Nikki:** First of all congrats. That's really exciting. My first book is *A Twinkle In My Eye* that is developing right now, basically. I'm just about to finally get started, so I'm excited for you and I'm excited for me because it's really amazing to just kind of try a new format and get it out there.

I think the same stuff applies, and it is just so much about the mindset, if you ask anyone who's written a book. I've heard Michael Hyatt talk about it where he's like, "Some days I just open up the document, write Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. There's nothing literally in that document except Chapter 1 in this document, and Chapter 2 in this document."

I think it really is kind of just about outsmarting writer's block, kind of tricking your own mindset and know, "How can I make it fun?" or "What can I do to reward myself?" because you know you can do it. I mean you've done it. You've written multiple blogs just via your blog posts, so I think it's just really so much about the mindset.





That's actually the first part of A Course About Copy, is I talk about #1 choosing your words wisely, so making sure that the stories that you're telling yourself – thoughts become things, so you want to make sure you're telling yourself the good stuff.

You can say, "Actually, wow, writing a book is even easier than writing my 5,000-word blog posts," just flipping the script for yourself when it comes to writing, then outsmarting writer's block by literally eliminating distractions and just sitting down and setting a timer and seeing what you can crank out for 10 minutes. Then if you want to keep going, then keep going. The bottom line for all of it is just moving past the perfectionism.

I've got a friend, Tiphani Montgomery, and she's written 7 books, 7 Essence magazine bestsellers, including the #1 spot, and this is specifically what she helps people with with her Best Sellers Project. Then there's Denise Duffield-Thomas who is encouraging people to write books left and right because that was huge for her. It's like a calling card basically for your business. For all of them it comes down to just doing it.

**Pat:** That's really what it always comes down to. You've just got to do it.

**Nikki:** Yes, and we talk about it, my girlfriends and I. 99% of my customers and clients are women, but when I was creating my course I joked that it was like course labor and delivery. When you get to this point when it's time, no one can have this baby but you.

You can have somebody bringing you ice chips. You can have somebody rubbing your shoulders, but no, this is really up to you. So unfortunately and fortunately, because you'll be so happy and proud and elated and euphoric when it's over, you've got to push that baby out, Pat. You're going to do it!

**Pat:** Well, I'm pregnant right now with it so it's coming. [laughing]

**Nikki:** Congratulations!

**Pat:** Thank you! I think it's a boy.

**Nikki:** It's going to be great, it really is, and then you've just got to do it, and then you'll be able to help other people on the other side. You can kind of look at it like that, too. You are your own case study, then however many months from now you'll be able to help people like, "Okay, here's what I did to trick myself into just getting it done," and that's all it takes.



**Pat:** Awesome. Nikki, this has been an awesome conversation. Thank you so much for the tips and sharing your story and just being a delightful person. It's great to have you on the show. Like I said, we'll have all the links we mentioned in the show notes available. Where can people go to find out more information from you?

**Nikki:** I'll have all of our goodies at [nikkielledgebrown.com/spi](http://nikkielledgebrown.com/spi), but of course when you're over at [nikkielledgebrown.com](http://nikkielledgebrown.com) you can poke around. That's my digi home. Then [acourseaboutcopy.com](http://acourseaboutcopy.com) is a straight shot to the free video series, if you want to do that, too.

Shout out to David Siteman-Garland because he was already on your podcast once upon a time. People were telling me about it and I was like, "Oh thanks" because he was a large inspiration as I finally created my course.

**Pat:** Yeah, David is the one who introduced me to you, and is partly the reason why you're here on the show, so we'll have to thank him.

Thank you again so much, and congratulations again on the new arrival coming soon and all the best.

**Nikki:** Thanks Pat.

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I hope you enjoyed that interview with Nikki Elledge Brown. She's amazing, right? You can just tell how awesome she is, and she's been very helpful to a lot of people who I know in the world of copywriting, wordsmithing, and communication as well. So if you'd like to learn more from Nikki, head on over to [NikkiElledgeBrown.com/spi](http://NikkiElledgeBrown.com/spi).

Of course all the links and resources mentioned in this particular episode will be available at [smartpassiveincome.com/session171](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session171).

Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time today. A couple mentions to our sponsors for today.

First up, [99Designs.com](http://99Designs.com), making it super easy for you to get any graphic design work done that you need for your business, whether you're just starting out or you're looking to upgrade something on your website already, whether you need a logo or a tshirt design or a truck wrap even.



You can go to [99Designs.com](http://99Designs.com), put in the kind of description for the images and the graphics that you need, and literally within a day you're going to get different designers from around the world competing for your favorite design. Then you get to pick your favorite one, and within 7 days you have a design that you love. If you don't, you get your money back. How awesome is that.

So if you're just starting out and you're looking to get a quick turnaround on some images at an affordable price, head on over to [99Designs.com/spi](http://99Designs.com/spi). That will also give you access to a \$99 Power Pack of services for free that you can put towards your next design project. Again that's [99Designs.com/spi](http://99Designs.com/spi).

I also want to mention last week's episode. Last week we had Ramit Sethi on, and a lot of people enjoyed his content and enjoyed his free video that he offered. That's going to help you with the next launch that you have for your next online business or your next product, and how to really dive into that.

He goes into a lot of the case studies and things that he's gone through over the last decade that has helped him create his online business, someone who I truly respect. I love Ramit.

If you want to get access to that particular video go to [smartpassiveincome.com/ztl5](http://smartpassiveincome.com/ztl5). That will take you to his free video that you can download and use just right there to kickstart your next venture. Again that's [smartpassiveincome.com/ztl5](http://smartpassiveincome.com/ztl5).

Thank you so much again for your time today. I really appreciate it. Of course all the reviews and ratings and subscriptions and downloads on iTunes – just thank you so much for that. I really appreciate you. Here's to you and your business and taking it to the next level.

I look forward to serving you in next week's episode of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Love you guys. Cheers.

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

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

[NikkiElledgeBrown.com](http://NikkiElledgeBrown.com)  
[A Course About Copy](#)



[John Morrow's Headline Hacks](#)

[Copyblogger](#)

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