



## **SPI Podcast Session #007 - Blogging Success and WordPress Plugin Development with 20 Year Old Entrepreneur Michael Dunlop**

show notes at: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session007>

This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, session #7. Run it!

**Announcer:** 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's a Sagittarius who likes long walks on the beach, Pat Flynn.

**Pat Flynn:** Hey everybody, what's up? Welcome to the 7th session of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Thank you for joining me today.

I'm really excited to have a special guest on the show, who I really look up to even though he is seven years younger than I am. This person is only 20 years old but he's killing it online. He's earning a full-time income from the internet, he works less than half-time hours, his websites have already helped and inspired me and Smart Passive Income to get to where it's at and I know he will be able to do the same for you.

He launched his first website when he was 16 years old and when I go to one of his sites, [IncomeDiary.com](http://IncomeDiary.com), I see pictures of him with some of the biggest online names you can think of if you're at all familiar with internet marketing, Yanik Silver; Craig Newmark, who is the founder of craigslist; Bob Parsons, who is the founder of Go Daddy; Matt Mullenweg, who is the founding developer of WordPress, the blogging platform that most of us use; Joel Comm; [Russell Brunson]; Gary Vaynerchuk, author of Crush It! The list goes on and on. He has pictures hugging these guys. It's amazing.

It's my pleasure to introduce Michael Dunlop to you today. Michael, welcome to the show. Thanks for taking the time out of your day to share some of your knowledge and experience with us.

**Michael Dunlop:** Thank you Patrick, it's good to be here. I enjoy your blog so it's a pleasure.

**Pat Flynn:** I appreciate that. Can you tell the listeners out there how you got started with blogging and your internet business?

**Michael Dunlop:** Sure. So I started my main big site when I was 16 and it was going really well. The problem was I had a 13 year old programmer and 13 year old programmers are not the best of programmers.



**Pat Flynn:** A 13 year old programmer?

**Michael Dunlop:** Yeah, he was very talented but he wasn't a clean programmer. So the site was slow, it took us forever to get different sites online. After a few sites with really bad coding, somebody told me about WordPress. WordPress basically makes it so easy for you to get a website online so quickly.

I started blogging the second I got WordPress online. It just made it easy for me. I just went from there really, from site to site. I wrote good content and networked.

**Pat Flynn:** That's really what it's all about, networking. You're very good at that, obviously. When you started your blog, did you initially want to make money from it? How did you go into blogging and how did you get to where you're at today?

**Michael Dunlop:** Anything I've done over the years, I'm really entrepreneurial. From a very young age, I was always trying to make money from whatever means possible. I started with eBay, like most people. The problem with eBay is it is literally just like any other job. You have to do customer support, you have to send things, go to the post office. There was a lot more to it than sitting there and seeing money coming in every day.

So I just started playing with websites. I was at school at the time and we were doing Young Enterprise. Young Enterprise is basically the opportunity to create a business with 10 friends at school and try to make some money out of it. I had to build a website, like I said. We won first prize for the website and I realized I was pretty good at this! I went from there and whatever I was thinking, whatever I knew right then and there, that's what I made a website about.

I started with a graphics website. That's what I was doing at the time, I was learning graphic design. I didn't really stick at it long but I had a really big site in graphics.

I went into the web design because web design was more necessary for having a popular website. I created WebDesignDev, which I later sold. I did quite well out of that. I re-launched it twice. I did it the first time when I was 16 and working in a supermarket at the time. I was getting 200,000 visits a month and I was making more every day from that than I was working at the supermarket. My Dad was telling me "Just work at the supermarket for a year. You're making more money from your websites but the lessons you can learn from working for somebody else are priceless", so I stayed working for a year at the supermarket. I enjoyed that as well so that was cool.

Once I stopped working at the supermarket, I started [Retireatat21](#) and that went pretty well. I actually started Retireatat21 because it got banned from Google Ad Sense. At the time, all I knew was Google Ad Sense. That made money at the time.



I thought "Oh no, I have to make a new site now and look at other opportunities to make money". I pretty much took the same model from the web design site and just started putting up tutorials. I started interviewing people and that was really when things started to take off because when you interview someone, they associate you with that name. If you interview some top guy, they'll associate you as being on their level because you talked to them. So that was really cool.

When you interview someone, they send their visitors, their fans to you. It really snowballed. I always find that with my success it just sort of happened. You're just going along and you're not making that much money and then one day you'll just work out how it works. It's like a mind change. That's when things started going really well for me. I started IncomeDiary three days after I had that mind change. I just started making lots of money and that's where I am now!

**Pat Flynn:** That's an awesome story. That's kind of like how I got started too. I just put my stuff out there, things started to happen and then things started to click. I learned from people as I went along, I joined mastermind groups, I got a whole compilation of information from all different people, like I'm sure you've gotten from all your interviews too and it's taken off. Congratulations on all your success, it's amazing.

You were talking about your Dad for a little bit, Barry Dunlop who is actually another famous internet marketer, who gave you some great advice to go work at that supermarket. I think it's very good advice. Also, it makes you appreciate what we do now as far as stepping away from that kind of 9-5 type of job and learning how we can utilize the internet to do something that we really want to do.

What else has your Dad done to influence you? He was an internet marketer himself. I'm a new Dad and I would love to be the best Dad possible and help my son become a successful entrepreneur too if that's what he really wanted to be. How else has your Dad influenced you and helped you along the way?

**Michael Dunlop:** My Dad has helped me quite a bit. The main things he did for me that were good - he was supportive but he was very tough. I was doing pretty well and certain things online and offline with the business side of things, not so much with my school. He was never too big about it, he wasn't like "Oh you're amazing". He was quite "Nothing is forever". He would keep me a bit more grounded and stuff, which was pretty good.

I think the best thing he did for me was take me to events. It really opened me up to all these other people who were doing different things online. When he started to take me to events, that's when quite a big shift in what I was doing online happened. I could see all these other successful people, that I didn't even know existed.

We all work on our websites every day but we don't really communicate with other like-minded people much. Once you communicate with those people, you talk, hang out. Not necessarily talking business, just talking general whatever you do every day. Just



being in the same mind frame as those people, you change how you think and it's a great opportunity. If you ever get to go to an event or talk to other people, it's really good to get around those people who think just like you do. It will change exactly how you think.

The other thing he did for me, was invest a big amount of money but he invested in an opportunity here and there and helped me out, hosting and stuff like that. At the time, I had just turned 15 when I started my first sites and having him invest in me. He expected the money back of course and I think that was good because if you just give someone some money, they will not value it, they will put it into anything and go back and ask for more. Because I knew I had to pay it back, I was quite wise with the money. I always re-invested whatever I made because I think that's one of the biggest things you can do to improve any business is to invest in yourself and your business.

**Pat Flynn:** That's great advice. I think your Dad's a very smart man. I think bringing you along on his journey, going to different events and stuff is a great thing. I would love to take my son to Blog World Expo. I'm actually heading there in a couple of weeks, that's my first event. I'm really excited to connect with other people.

The fact that he obviously knew what he was doing as an internet marketer but he didn't just set up a website for you and say "OK, this is how you do it", he kind of let you learn on your own but helped you along the way, is that right?

**Michael Dunlop:** Yeah, I used Dreamweaver to create my first website. He doesn't know any real coding but he had a tech guy working for him. He only had a couple of employees but he let me sit down with his tech guy and he showed me around Dreamweaver. That was really cool. I got really into that and that was when I started doing a lot of tutorials online because I passed on what I knew and what I learned from other people. I started doing tutorials and showing other people. That's where a lot of my traffic came from in the early days.

**Pat Flynn:** Awesome. So you have a lot of very successful experiences online, [Retireat21](#), [IncomeDiary.com](#) and you said you sold [webdesigndev.com](#). You obviously know what you're doing. I'd like to ask you a couple of questions based on your experience with creating popular money generating websites. First, what's your secret? What do you feel that you do on each of your web properties that makes them so successful?

**Michael Dunlop:** Definitely the first thing is content. There is no reason to visit a website if there's no value, no tool or anything for them to use. There is no point in someone coming to a site, to any shop or anything if there isn't anything they want there. Make sure you deliver what people want. I just focused on good content, to inspire people and keep people coming back.

Apart from that, I think the main thing I did, like I mentioned earlier, is invest in my business. If I made \$500 - and I know this isn't easy for everybody, because I was



young and I didn't need money to pay for rent and food and everything, I could invest what money I made back into my site, getting better design, getting other people to write content and stuff. I think that's how I've been able to build such great sites, it's because I've invested in my business.

**Pat Flynn:** That's a good point. Actually, I've been doing a lot of that lately, using some of my income to help improve the website. I actually just paid for an SEO site analysis for my site. I paid quite a bit of money for it actually because I want to get to that next level.

**Michael Dunlop:** I've just done the same thing.

**Pat Flynn:** Did you go through Yoast?

**Michael Dunlop:** Yeah.

**Pat Flynn:** Oh no way, that's funny.

**Michael Dunlop:** It was worth the money.

**Pat Flynn:** Definitely. I haven't really announced this yet but I'm going to be holding a webinar on my site with Joost, the guy from yoast.com and he is going to be helping me go over my notes and sharing that with everyone.

I'll talk about that later and I'll have a link to that webinar on there. I think it will be helpful to everyone because it's definitely a very thorough report that he gave me and I learned. Even though I know my [sites] pretty successful right now and it's doing fairly well, I need a lot of improvement when it comes to SEO. Investing in your business is definitely a good thing to do. A lot of people just make money and spend it. You can grow a lot faster if you invest in yourself. That's really good advice.

When you said you create good content, I see on a lot of your websites that a lot of the content that you have that a lot of people talk about are your tutorials, which you talked about earlier. I think that's a great way to get people involved in your site by simply teaching them. Have you found that your tutorials are some of the most popular things on your website?

**Michael Dunlop:** Yeah, I think it's an even match between interviews, top lists and me teaching the tutorials. Just teaching people isn't enough. If they're not inspired to go and take action and do it, they're not going to do it. We all know a lot more than we apply in our lives. We don't do the things because we're not pushed to do it and we have no reason to do it.

When you're inspired and you have somebody saying "You can do this, all these other people have done it and they did it with a lot less resources at a much younger age", you've got no choice but to do it. I think inspiration comes a lot into it. I think my top



lists - Top 30 Youngest Internet Entrepreneurs or Top 30 Earning Blogs - something that inspires people like that. That's the biggest driver for traffic for me by far.

**Pat Flynn:** That's awesome, that's good advice. A lot of people love those list type posts. A lot of your tutorials, most of them are free, all of them I think. How are you generating money from them?

**Michael Dunlop:** You show someone how to do something and you monetize it with different offers. Say I was showing somebody how to design a website in Photoshop, I have the opportunity to promote Photoshop, I have the opportunity to promote Dreamweaver or something...

**Pat Flynn:** A domain and host too right?

**Michael Dunlop:** Yep. I can promote a book on how to build better websites with Photoshop. I could promote services from other people's sites that offer coding and programming. There's so many things you can do, just make sure you're always leading your content somewhere. You can either link to another post or link to a service, an article or a product somewhere else.

**Pat Flynn:** That's awesome. You're not selling anything, you're just giving free advice and offering a recommendation on how to improve that or getting money along the way while people go through that process. It's kind of a win/win situation for both you and people who are taking the tutorial who want to learn how to do those things.

So that's very good advice and actually I do a lot of the same stuff on my blog. For example, I've taught people how to use Market Samurai to do keyword research and build a niche site. I don't tell people "You should buy Market Samurai", I just say "This is the tool I use" and Market Samurai has lately become one of my top affiliate products lately. I haven't aggressively sold that at all. I don't hurt anyone's feelings or get on anyone's nerves because I'm being too aggressive.

I think that's really good advice for people and I think that's where a lot of internet marketing has headed lately because the last couple of years we've been bombarded with long sales pages and offers and stuff that just doesn't seem real anymore. I think what you're doing is very real and it can't be any more real than that. That's really awesome.

The last thing about your website IncomeDiary.com, you've interviewed a lot of the top web entrepreneurs, I mentioned some of them earlier. Their combined income is probably well into the tens of millions of dollars. For those of you out there who haven't visited Michael's blog, definitely check it out, IncomeDiary.com. He has some really really amazing interviews, all for free. If people can only listen to one or two of those interviews, which ones would you choose and why?



**Michael Dunlop:** It's a hard question. I've probably interviewed over 100 or even maybe 200 people by now across Retireat21 and IncomeDiary. I would have to say the first person I recommend is [Ted Nicholas](#). Ted is probably turning 90 now. He is an old school copywriter. He has made people billions of dollars, I think it's nearly at 8 billion dollars now that he's made other people. He is very good with his copy writing. His story inspires and it teaches. I like that combination. Like I was saying earlier, you don't just teach, you have to inspire at the same time. He spoke for about an hour and a half. The interview is supposed to take half an hour but the guy just knows so much information and that is my favorite interview. It's one that most people listen to time after time.

[Ryan Lee](#) is the other guy. I really enjoyed his interview as well. He talks about how to make money through continuity and passive income, which goes well for your guys.

**Pat Flynn:** That's like through membership websites. I actually know a little bit about Ryan Lee, he is in the fitness industry and has made a killing off of membership websites in the fitness industry, is that right?

**Michael Dunlop:** Yeah, he has something like 53 continuity websites and he gets new members every day and he just sits there and sees the money come in. That's some guy, you should interview at some point as well.

**Pat Flynn:** I would love to because I would love to create a continuity program of some kind some day. Almost automatic money when that's set up properly.

Switching gears a bit, I want to get into something more specific. It's actually your latest project. It's a premium WordPress plugin that you created and you now sell online. Honestly it seems to be everywhere now. I see it everywhere, which is awesome. Congratulations on your success on that. The WordPress plugin is called [PopUp Domination](#). Is this your first WordPress plugin that you've developed?

**Michael Dunlop:** Yep, the first one.

**Pat Flynn:** Did you develop it yourself or did you find a programmer to do it for you?

**Michael Dunlop:** In March I got my site re-done by this team of programmers and a designer in Scotland. I kept in contact and I constantly use them every week since March. Like I said, I invest a lot into my business because I'll get a better return. One day me and the designer were chatting and we said "Let's do this product together". The reason why a lot of people don't get things online quicker, they don't set a date, they're always waiting to get a product ready.

They're always waiting to get their website perfect before they launch. We decided "This is our idea, let's launch in 10 days time, let's just work around the clock". We had a programmer and two coders and he was designing around the clock. I was pretty



much the eyes and the idea man. Everything they showed me I would be like "No, change this...". I don't know if you've seen a TV program called Mr. Monk, he has OCD.

**Pat Flynn:** That's on the USA Network, for those of you in the US.

**Michael Dunlop:** He has to have everything perfect. I'm pretty much the same. I make sure that the product is as perfect as we can get it in 10 days and then we launched it. We made sure we launched it straight away. If you don't set a date, you'll never get around to launching it. I know so many people who start a blog but they don't want to launch it until they're ready and then they're never ready.

We launched it and then we let our early customers tell us what more features they wanted and what things to change, if there were any bugs and we went from there. Two months later we did a big re-launch, version 2 of everyone's ideas, we brought out a stand-alone version, not just the WordPress version. We created new themes, new options and all these other customizations that everyone was asking us.

I think that's a really good point, to listen to your customers, your readers. Not all of them are going to be right but it's the best advice you're going to get from people, I presume. We did that, we re-launched and it went very well.

**Pat Flynn:** That's awesome. I'm thinking about doing a WordPress plugin myself and I was just worried about the development process and just to see that you did it in 10 days from the idea to launch...

**Michael Dunlop:** What I would say on the programming front is get the best programmers because going back to that 13 year old, I loved the guy and I probably wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for him because we [inaudible] a lot of stuff on the way. When you're building anything programming [inaudible] today, make sure you get the best guy you can. It's going to be worth the investment because if it's not good it will ruin your product and your website.

**Pat Flynn:** Right. The next question, you can obviously create the best plugin or software in the world but unless you generate some buzz for it or get it known before it's launched, it's not going to be successful at all. How did you get your plugin on everyone's radar? It seems to be everywhere and a lot of the top bloggers seem to just know about it and are really happy to spread the word. How has that happened?

**Michael Dunlop:** Top bloggers and marketers even bought it themselves. A surprisingly large amount of them just went out and bought it. That was really cool because it sort of felt like you had made it. You've got all these people that you look up to and they're buying stuff from you and thinking your stuff is amazing, that just blows my mind.

Basically the ones that didn't buy it, I gave it to them. I said "You have to test this out", that works great for your brand. The most important for getting that sort of buzz is



doing something for them first. If you want something from anyone, do something for them first and they will be more likely to do something for you.

Over the year or so before I even thought of launching a product, I interviewed people, I did top lists and I featured them in it, I promoted their products, I did all these things for them and then when it was my turn to do something, they listened and they promoted for me.

**Pat Flynn:** That's good advice. [PopUp Domination](#), for those of you who don't understand what we've been talking about for a few minutes now, it's a plugin that you can put on WordPress, actually it's stand alone now so you don't need to have WordPress. It creates a pop-up on your site that's very customizable, it looks beautiful and it's actually not as intrusive as you might think. If you go to his blog at [IncomeDiary.com](#), you'll see it and you can use it to build your email list. So far, everyone that has used this plugin has been raving about how it's increased their opt-in rates by hundreds of percent.

I don't want to get into the debate here about whether pop-ups are good or bad, just bottom line, it does increase your conversion rates for your opt-in lists. I think it's really important that if you're going to build some software or a WordPress plugin, it has to work. If you give it away to people, if you help other people out first or just give your plugin away to some of the top bloggers to get them to notice it. If it performs really well, they'll be more than happy to help you out.

That's what I plan to do, I'm not exactly sure where I want to go with a WordPress plugin. I have a few ideas but I know that when I get it developed, like you said I'm going to find really good developers, I'm going to make sure it blows people's minds away so that the software kind of speaks for itself. [PopUp Domination](#) does that. It's proven to work, people are happy to rave about it. Congratulations on all the success with that. Especially for your first WordPress plugin, that's really awesome. I hope to mimic your results there. So congratulations.

**Michael Dunlop:** Thanks very much. Everything I've spoken about up to now, anything I do, it's not rocket science. It's something anyone can do. It's just about taking action, applying yourself and doing it. Anyone can go out and interview someone. When I first started, I had no traffic and I interviewed some of the top 100 website owners. I did it just by asking. I think a lot of people just need to take action, get yourself out there and ask. Just build on that. Build on momentum, do what I did, get your blog going, build a brand, launch a product.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah. I think doing interviews is a great way to go, especially if you're just starting out. It will put your name on the radar. It will associate you with those people and it's not very hard to do. That's all you have to do is ask. I tweeted or Facebooked you and I was just like "Hey, you want to do an interview?" and you said yeah. A lot of people would be scared to do that but unless you take those first steps, nothing is going to happen.



I know you have an affiliate program for your plugin, which I am a part of and will be - I'm just trying to be honest here, I will be promoting on the show notes on this site - so if you're interested in testing out PopUp Domination you can check it out on the show notes, [smartpassiveincome.com/popupdomination](http://smartpassiveincome.com/popupdomination).

A lot of people who aren't experienced with online marketing would say "Why would I want to give away 50% of my commission? Why would I want other people selling my product and giving away that much money? Why can't I just keep it all for myself? What is the benefit behind doing affiliate marketing?"

**Michael Dunlop:** From the product owner standpoint, it's really simple. It's the difference between making \$5000 and \$50,000. It's that simple.

With affiliates, you're going to get volume, you're going to get their customers and when you get their customers you have now a buyers list. A buyers list is the most important list because you have proven buyers. When you promote something, say you did a blog post about Market Samurai, like we were saying earlier, if you send buyers to it, they are much more likely to take action and buy it. It's worth it. It's an electronic download, it's not like you have any costs associated to each customer. The more you sell, the better you're going to look. Your brand will be out there more, the more people you can keep getting to come back to your site and do more interviews, there is so much opportunity. Any opportunity you have to make more sales, take it.

**Pat Flynn:** I never really thought about that. I know affiliate marketing is good because it's kind of like a whole bunch of people working for you, like a sales team. But then those leads that you get from those other people, you're pretty much just grabbing their audiences and with whatever products you follow up with, they're yours 100%.

**Michael Dunlop:** Exactly, it's a lot more powerful. I know people that will come out with cheap products just so they can build buyers lists. A buyer can be worth \$20/30 to a product owner because he knows he can make that much money per buyer he gets promoting someone else's program.

**Pat Flynn:** That's why I see some people who are promoting their products to affiliates for 100% commission. They just want the buyers, right?

**Michael Dunlop:** Exactly. Typically some people will go to 60/75% commission and they will leave some for themselves because they know they can do a lot more volume that way. Their affiliates will make more money and therefore push harder. Ultimately, the more buyers you have on your list, the more money you're going to make from your affiliate promotions.

**Pat Flynn:** Ah man, now my head is spinning because I really want to get something going now. That's awesome.



We're running out of time here. The last thing I want to ask you, I usually ask this to all my guests, what's working for you right now? What is something that you're doing right now that's working for your business that you could share with the listeners that they can implement right now?

**Michael Dunlop:** The thing I do most, it's going back to the Mr. Monk thing, I basically look at everything I'm doing and I bullet proof it, I make sure everything is perfect. I'm not saying make sure it's perfect before you put it online because in most cases it's not perfect ever for me, but I'm always improving things.

You've got to keep looking at your site, keep testing. Testing is a really important thing. Switch out different affiliate products, if you're promoting products because 1) You may find you're making 30 cents a click and 2) You might find you're making \$3 a click. You're not going to find that \$3 a click conversion unless you test different ads, different text link buttons and different products.

So just test, try lots of different things. If it doesn't work as well then just change it back. That's the one thing I do more than anything, just test.

**Pat Flynn:** That's great advice. Honestly, it's not very hard at all, you can use something like Google Optimizer, which is a free tool from Google and it literally takes a second to set up.

Thank you again Michael for all of your great advice, your inspirational stories and stuff about the plugins, which I'm really interested in. Hopefully I'll get something going here soon.

If people want to learn more about you or get in contact with you, where would you recommend they go?

**Michael Dunlop:** [Income Diary](#) is probably the best place to find me right now. They can also find me on Twitter, which is [@MichaelDunlop](#) or they can email me directly at [michael@incomediary.com](mailto:michael@incomediary.com).

**Pat Flynn:** Awesome, thanks for that.

Thanks Michael, I really appreciate it, I know everyone out there does too so hopefully we'll see you at [IncomeDiary.com](#) and we'll talk to you soon, OK.

**Michael Dunlop:** Thank you Patrick.

**Pat Flynn:** Thanks, bye.

Alright everyone, I hope you enjoyed that interview with Michael Dunlop, again from IncomeDiary.com and you can also find him at [Retireat21.com](#). Again, he's only 20 years old, not even 21 yet, making a killing online. We have a lot to learn from him.



Obviously dabbling in many many things online and that's exactly what you've got to do, find out where your place is and just crush it.

Before I let you go, I just want to remind you, you can find me over at [Facebook.com/smartpassiveincome](https://www.facebook.com/smartpassiveincome). Come join us there, come say hi, I will say hi back. We talk about a lot of random, cool, fun stuff there.

Also, don't forget to pick up your free e-book if you haven't already, you can get it at [ebooksthesmartway.com](https://www.ebooksthesmartway.com). It's my guide to publishing, marketing and automating a killer e-book for your business blog or whatever.

So yeah, that's it. Seventh session done. I'll see you in the eighth. Until then, good luck with your business. Stay healthy, stay safe and I'll talk to you soon, OK.

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