

# SPI Podcast Session #27 - How to Harness the Power of Social Proof Online

## Transcript

show notes at: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session27>

What's up and welcome to the 27th session of the Smart Passive Income Podcast.

Before we get right into today's content, first of all, the SPI Podcast is up to 212 5-star reviews on iTunes, which just blows my mind! Thank you so much, it's just incredible to see everyone responding so positively to the shows.

A couple of reviews I just want to highlight really quick because they mean so much to me:

The first one is by "StillDayDreaming" - This podcast has lots of really useful information, and it is not boring.

That "not boring" part is what really makes me happy because I definitely don't want to be boring.

Another one from "Tim Racette" says - The SPI podcast has helped me go from having no website and 0 traffic to a killer website and hundreds of readers a day, a stream of newsletter subscribers and steady eBook sales in the span of 6 months. Pat is one of the most genuine guys on the internet and quite frankly in general. I owe a lot to you, thanks Pat."

No - thank you Tim - that just makes my day and really what this is all about for me.

Now let's talk about this for a second, because this has everything to do with today's show, which is all about "Social Proof".

Social proof is the idea of having other people speak for you, and it's powerful, powerful stuff. It could mean the difference between people visiting your website sticking around and even buying your products - and people doing nothing.

I first learned about social proof from an episode of Internet Business Mastery with Sterling and Jay that I listened to back when I still had my 9 to 5 job, where Jay used an example from his own life that really just stuck in my head - he talked about how he was at a farmer's market and was looking for something good to eat - you know how farmer's markets usually have really good food - totally fresh and that sort of thing. Anyways, he went to the food vendor area and there was this super long line coming from one of the food places, much longer than any other line, and THAT's how he knew that that was the place to get food at. Because there was so

many people there, they must be worth waiting in line for.

I love that example, and I've actually experienced this idea myself many times before. I was at the Fashion Valley mall here in San Diego, walking around with my family when all of a sudden we turned a corner and there was this HUGE group of people surrounding one of the stores. We didn't know what store but we went over to see what all the fuss was about. Apparently, Natasha Beddingfield, the singer was there (she sing's that song "I got a pocket got a pocket full of sunshine"). Anyways, the point is that seeing that huge crowd told us that there was something going on which definitely made us curious and want to learn more.

Social proof is also used by street vendors all of the time too. April and I were in Hollywood one time and in the distance we kept hearing a crowd cheering, so we walked toward the sound, saw this huge group of people and they were all surrounding these break dancers who were just awesome. And I think they knew about social proof too because between each segment of their performance, they'd ask the crowd to scream and scream louder - and that's what caught our attention.

I've said this many-a-time on the blog before - there's nothing more powerful than having other people do the marketing for you.

For example, I could tell you all I want that if you listen to the SPI podcast you will get great online business advice, improve your results on your blog and you won't be bored, but when other people share that information about me, for me, it's worth so much more. That's why reviews on iTunes are important and why I ask from time to time for you to leave your honest feedback on there, because when other people decide to listen or not, they read those to see if it's worth it, and they could care less about what I have to say. Or, they hear from their friends on Facebook or Twitter that they loved an episode - and that's absolutely social proof too. Social proof on social networks. That's worth so much more than what I have to say.

Then of course, it's my job, at that point, after they've been convinced by others to have a listen, to take it from there and prove to them that all of what they read or heard is true. And of course if that social proof is real, which it always should be, then there should be no problem with that.

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There are several opportunities to use social proof to our advantage online. In this session I'll be going over several different examples in all areas of online marketing and blogging that use social proof - big examples, small examples - why they work, things like that - and hopefully at least one or two of these go along with something that you're up to right now and you can take action and implement the same strategies.

Many of these strategies I've used or are using as we speak, and some of them I haven't used myself but I've been on the receiving end, or a part of that social in social proof and having that marketer's mind I knew exactly what they were up to, and again it's just incredible what happens

when you have other people doing the marketing for you.

So let's get right into it - let's talk about...

## **Numbers**

For some reason I used to watch a lot of QVC (which, by the way, I don't know if you knew this, but QVC stands for quality, value and convenience), anyways, I used to watch QVC and the Home Shopping Network - where you could buy things being sold on TV.

I never bought anything, but I did watch and learn about the different products and how they were sold.

One interesting thing they do is they show the number of how many product that have been sold. That, or how many products are left (which involve another marketing tactic called scarcity, which is worth a whole new podcast episode, which I'll keep in mind). Either way - product sold or products left, you can see, live, the counter moving which means the product is being sold.

This is massive social proof right here in the form of numbers. Psychologically, we just love to see numbers moving and knowing that other people are buying the product, that helps other people make the decision to buy the product as well. If people are on the fence, that counter is a great way to turn those fence sitters into buyers.

Online, that same strategy and idea of social proof can be integrated in several different ways, which you've probably seen before and may or may not know that social proof is actually happening.

For example the number of rss subscribers a blog has.

If you had a choice to read a blog with 30 readers or 30,000 readers, and the material was pretty much the same, which one would you read? I'm guessing that 99% of you would probably lean towards the one with 30,000 because they probably have a ton of people who subscribe to their blog for a reason. This is why those Feedburner badges (they actually call them "chicklets", I have no idea why) are so popular. They are there to show a blog's visitor exactly how many people subscribe.

If you head on over to [smartpassiveincome.com](http://smartpassiveincome.com) you can see my numbers right there across the top. This is done on purpose because it's social proof to a brand new visitor that I am someone worth reading and subscribing to. And again, I'm not being aggressive in asking people to subscribe, you will not see any popups from me or any aggressive marketing tactics like that, but it is a way to provide social proof - a sort of way of having other people say - hey, check this guy out, I am too.

Now, does this mean a counter on a site that shows only 30 subscribers could work against

you?

ABSOLUTELY!

I would actually recommend not putting any sort of social proof on your website until you have social proof. Don't prove you have 30 readers because that could work against you.

Always think about your website in the shoes of a new visitor, even if you're not a beginner - remember, it's all about how they feel about your site when you get there, and you don't want a badge that says you have 30 readers to scare people off before reading the awesome content you have to provide which could potentially get them to subscribe too.

If you're just starting out, keep that number hidden until it gets to at least 3 figures, or even 150 and then you've got a good number of people following you so that it won't hurt you if you show that off.

So that's subscribers, but the same thing goes with email subscribers. Aweber, for example, has it's own badge to show off how many people are on your email list. Same thing.

How comfortable are you joining a newsletter with 15 subscribers, as opposed to one that has 1500?

1500 subscribers can't be wrong, can they? That's the idea - of course 1500 subscribers could indeed be wrong, but to a new visitor it's less likely than if there were only 15.

Again, don't let the numbers work against you.

So rss subscribers, email subscribers, and here's another one, retweets and likes, or even the view count on YouTube videos.

Posts and articles that show off the fact that there are 0 likes and 0 retweets are less likely to keep people around and reading. On the other hand, if a post has 150 retweets and 379 likes, you can be sure that just because those numbers are high people are going to read and share. Why? Because of the social proof. They're saying to themselves, "that post MUST be good if it has 150 retweets and 379 likes, right? I think I'll read to see what all the fuss is about".

And if the content IS good, then that person will share, your numbers will grow even higher, more social proof, more bang, booyah.

So again, what can you do if you're a beginner?

Here's a resource for you: check out <http://www.triberr.com>. It's a site that I don't use myself but a lot of my buddies online use it quite effectively, and it's a great way to get more eyeballs on

your content. Basically you join a tribe, some are open and some are invite only, and I think you can create your own too, and whenever you publish a piece of content your entire tribe tweets it out for you, and when someone else posts something you do the same, and it happens automatically. Now - realize this is only for people who are seriously looking to engage with more people, and although it will raise your tweet counts, and traffic to your site, if you're publishing low quality stuff you could get suspended.

But, you should always be publishing high-quality stuff anyways and engaging with people so that you shouldn't even need a service like [triberr.com](http://triberr.com) to flourish. But it will help.

Another numbers social proof thing that I'm a big fan of is the number of comments on posts. I always try to engage with my audience - within the post so they will respond to a question or an opinion or something - and also within the comment section as well. I'll reply to comments, and ask questions so I get even more answers, and what this does is a few things.

Most importantly, the conversation that happens AFTER the post adds to the quality of the post, most of the time. I have a ton of smart readers who correct me or just add more to what I already have to say, which is great. Also, it shows that I'm a real person who knows that a post doesn't just end when it's published. In fact, I believe that's the beginning of everything - sort of like graduation or commencement. You do all this work to get to that point, but really that's when things really start to happen and it would be a waste if you just published and let it sit, sort of like going to school for 4 or 5 years and then just sitting on the couch all day. What's the point?

In addition to that, all that additional conversation drives up the comment count, and yes I have it setup so that my comments add to the comment count as well, which is prominently shown next to each of the posts in a bright green quotation bubble so it can be easily seen.

What happens is when that count keeps going up and up and up, it drives more readers to that post. A post with 200 comments is definitely worth reading, right? Maybe, but it definitely gets people to wonder what it's about.

Sometimes I write a post and it gets a ton of comments in a short period of time, using all of those techniques I just mentioned, and I'll actually go to Facebook and Twitter and quickly mention that - like I'll say, "Whoa, this post I just put up today already has 77 comments! Check it out by clicking here". Now, since I keep track of those links I know that those posts are some of the ones that get the most amount of clicks. Why? Again, because of that social proof.

77 comments!

And that's another thing, using actual numbers. Like I said, people like to see those numbers.

It would be totally different...TOTALLY different if I said "Whoa, this post I just put up today already has a bunch of comments, check it out here", or "Whoa, this post I just put up today has

a ton of comments, or more comments than normal, check it our here...”

Doesn't have the same effect, does it?

It's sort of like why people love my income reports so much, they are down to the penny. I know a lot of people who report their earnings in pie graphs and percentages, which is fine, but they are harder to relate to - people don't know exactly what those numbers are so they are less attractive.

Exact numbers are good, and this is why saying \$7906.55, which is the amount I made the first month I sold my eBook on GreenExamAcademy.com, is better than just rounding up to a nice round number like \$8000.

Or, why saying I have 212 5-star ratings on itunes is much better than just saying over 200.

See what I did there at the beginning of the show?

And this is especially important in this episode because (sidebar, and I'm going to shamelessly plug something for me here) the SPI podcast was nominated for 2 Podcast Awards, and a lot of new traffic has been coming to the site and listening to the podcast. I needed to inject that social proof right from the start for new listeners, and the beauty of it is that it's something that can be verified in iTunes, which is cool.

So if you have 1 minute, and you feel the SPI podcast is worthy of your vote, whether you're a veteran listener or a newbie just looking to get into this kind of stuff, I would just love you if you went to <http://www.podcastawards.com> and voted for me. You can vote for me in both the "People's Choice" section, and the "Business Section". Again, only if you feel it's worthy of your vote. And voting resets everyday at midnight so if you really wanted to you could vote daily, which would just be totally awesome.

Voting ends on October 27th, 2011 at midnight, so again if you cast a vote for me, or if you have done so already, thank you, thank you, thank you!

Anyways, back to my original point...

Numbers. Gotta use 'em, gotta love 'em.

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Okay, so let's go beyond the numbers and talk about something much more important - **the people**, and how people, your audience, can help you crush it with social proof.

People and numbers aren't totally separate though, obviously. The more people involved the

better, but I mean talking about people individually and the messages they have to say for others to read or listen to. Amazingly powerful - but like numbers, it can work against you too.

Like I mentioned before, there's nothing like having other people market for you - but on the flip side, there's nothing worse than having other people market against you after experiencing what you have to offer.

Especially in today's world, with everyone being so connected and open with everything - a rave review can totally make you, but a bad one can just totally crush you - and real fast too.

I know that sounds scary, but that's the truth, and so as publishers and content providers and product creators and attention grabbers, we have to make sure that we always go above and beyond to just get people to really talk about us, our products, or our content, in a good way. The most obvious thing we can do is just to be epic, but I'm not going to get into that because you should know that already. Be epic, write epic content, and you'll get people talking about your stuff and sharing it and just putting a mess of social proof into what you have to offer.

I want to talk about some specific strategies that you can do, beyond the normal testimonials and things like that which can come naturally with great content and value.

The first example comes directly from one of the emails I send to people who are subscribed to my newsletter autoresponder series (you can sign up for that and get a copy of my free eBook about publishing, marketing and automating a killer eBook, which has been downloaded over 25,000 times at [ebooksthesmartway.com](http://ebooksthesmartway.com)), and as much as I would like to just keep this particular story exclusive to the newsletter, it's so awesome and relevant I just had to share it with you here - and if you've read this already then at least you're listening to it now and it might be a good reminder for you if you haven't tried it yet.

And as I do in the email I want to thank my good friend Mark Mason first, which is where I first saw this take place. Mark can be found at [MasonWorld.com](http://MasonWorld.com) - he's been a guest on the podcast before, actually - I think he was the very first guest in episode #2 - fantastic guy, he came to San Diego a few months ago and we met for the first time and hung out - I really wish we could do it more often.

He's great.

Anyways, let me break this down into steps for you:

1. First, find a product that you'd like to promote as an affiliate, preferably one that you've used before, are familiar with and are confident in your recommendation to others (that's my rule for anything I promote).
2. Second, contact the creator or owner of that product, and try to get at least 1 free copy that you can give away to your audience. If you can't make that happen, buy some

additional copies of your own to give away.

3. On your site hold a contest to win those free copies of the product. To enter the contest, people have to leave a public comment about how that product would help them, and what they would do with it, and make sure those comments can easily be seen and read. The winner of the contest can be randomly selected, or maybe you can choose the best comment, it's up to you.
4. The links to that product that you tell people to view before they leave a comment should be your affiliate link for that product, which of course must be disclosed.

### **Now Here is Why This Works:**

This works because:

1. People love to get free stuff, so you'll get more people in front of that product (through your affiliate link), because of your contest.
2. When people leave their comments (there were almost 300 comments on the post that I ran a promotion using this strategy for), everyone else sees what everyone is saying about that product. That's promotional material - not from you **but from other people**, which is much more powerful, and that's social proof at it's finest right there.
3. And the thing is, you're not directly promoting anything, and you're not seen as someone just trying to earn a buck. Everybody is a winner!

If the product is good, and has a good landing page then it will practically sell itself.

If you can contact the owner like I did, have him or her setup a special price just for you for a certain number of days, then you can increase your affiliate sales even more, especially if the price will increase again later.

I never once told people they should buy the product I was holding the contest for, they made that decision on their own based on everyone else's recommendation and praise about the product, and I also mentioned that if someone made a purchase and they won the contest I would refund their payment.

Super cool stuff.

It takes some work and coordination, but it's pretty darn cool and works pretty well. You can see that being done in my July 2010 income report, which I'll link to in the show notes.

As always, you can grab the show notes by going to <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session27>

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Another strategy that I've seen put to good use involves webinars. I've been doing more



webinars lately, mostly private ones with coaching students and things like that, but I've seen this strategy used on webinars with hundreds of people and it's pretty cool, and simple to implement.

If you're hosting a webinar, just make sure that during the webinar you call out people's names and what they are saying, especially if they are saying something cool or nice about you.

The nice thing about using software like GoToWebinar to host your webinars is that all attendees have a chance to type in responses to your questions, and if you can ask questions that generate nice responses about you, simply just mentioning the first name of the person and their response will go a long long way.

Not only does it show the other attendees what other people are saying, which they normally wouldn't be able to read since those responses are private for the host only, but when you call out a specific name those specific people whose name you called out will definitely be more engaged and be more likely to do follow through with any call to actions that you may have.

Using names go a long way - it's like using specific numbers instead of general ones. They make what people are saying a lot more real. That's why you see people's names, and often times a picture and a location along with testimonials on sales pages and things like that.

I'm actually going to have Lewis Howes on the show sometime in the near future. He's the webinar king and is doing amazingly well with selling product through webinars, and I definitely want to share his knowledge with you. Webinars are a totally new ballgame that can literally generate thousands of dollars, and sometimes even hundreds of thousands of dollars in a very short period of time, and I mean like in just a matter of hours, it's crazy. So stay tuned for that episode, which I'm really excited about.

Back to social proof.

I don't think we can talk about social proof without mentioning exactly how social networks can be put into the equation.

And the benefit of using social networks like Facebook and Twitter and LinkedIn is that people can see that social proof in REAL TIME, or close to real time, and of course because things are being talked about on other people's profiles and accounts that have the ability to be spread and go viral, and again all of this is much more powerful than if I just simply tweeted or facebook'd things myself.

Something cool I saw one time was a Facebook page that was setup for a specific product that was being sold, this was an information product, and the owner of this product told their customers to like that Facebook page and post on that page about what they enjoy about the product the most or how it has helped them, to get a chance to win something like an iPad or

iPhone 4 or something like that.

I didn't know about this until I received an email from the owner who was obviously promoting it to me, but he told me in the email to go to the Facebook page to see what everyone else was saying about it. Obviously, this was all timed so when I got to the page I saw hundreds of VERY RECENT posts from people saying what they liked about the product and how it has helped them, which made for a VERY compelling argument to purchase the product.

To be honest I actually didn't purchase it because I didn't need it, I was just signed up for the email list so I could study these kinds of marketing strategies, but it was really cool and really well done, and it seems like it wouldn't be that hard to implement. Just setup a Facebook page for the product, get your existing customers to like it (which raises the numbers of fans for that page - again, that goes along with social proof in numbers, which I talked about earlier), and then send people to that page and make sure you have a way for them to go from there to the sale page, which you can setup a separate tab for in Facebook. If you're looking for how to do things like this on Facebook just check out my YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/smartpassiveincome>

Very cool stuff.

Twitter can be used the same way, especially using the hashtags for something. I've seen used pretty well during product launches - again, real time testimonials and people marketing for you. If you ever attend any events like Blog World Expo or, like for example I attended the Financial Blogger's Conference a couple of weeks ago - the hashtag for that event was a great way to see real time what was being said - and when I was speaking, for example, hundreds of tweets went out with my name and my hashtag which totally showed others in real time what was being said. It was pretty cool, I've never experienced anything like that before.

Social proof people - it's human nature for people to want to belong to part of a group, and when a large group of people are talking about something, sharing information about something or just all of their attention, collectively is given to someone, everyone else will want to know what all the fuss is about and will want to join in on the fun too - that's really what it's all about, so in your business or brand, think about ways that you can harness social proof. Where are people in your business and how can you utilize the power of social media and numbers and the written word to make sure other people can see what people are saying about you and what you have to offer?

I hope you enjoyed today's episode, and if you haven't already please vote for the podcast once again at [PodcastAwards.com](http://PodcastAwards.com). The awards ceremony is actually at Blog World Expo in Los Angeles, which is exactly where I'll be in the beginning of November. I'm scheduled to speak at 2:45pm on Friday the 4th of November, so if you're going to Blog World Expo I would love to meet you there. Just come up to me and say hi, I'll be wearing a Red & White backpack that says "Hi My Name is Pat", which matches the about tag on my homepage at

SmartPassiveIncome.com - just come up and say hi, please don't be shy.

Again, thank you all so much for your support. If you're at the gym right now, just push a little bit harder today, if you're on a Drive, I wish you nothing but open lanes and green lights, and if you're just on a walk or sitting at home listening to me on your iPod or mp3 player or computer, just enjoy the rest of your day and thanks for taking me along with you.

Show notes and links are available at <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session27>, and until next time, I wish you all the best.

Cheers! Bye!