



**SPI Podcast Session #59 –
How Viral Happens
An Interview with Jonah Berger, Author of Contagious**

show notes at: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session59>

Pat: This is the Smart Passive Income Podcast with Pat Flynn session #59! **Do the Harlem shake.**

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 wants to go to soccer team...someday! Pat Flynn!

Pat: Hey, what's up? This is Pat Flynn and welcome to session 59 of the Smart Passive Income Podcast. I am FINALLY back. Finally back.

What does that mean? That means there hasn't been a podcast for about two weeks now...but it wasn't because I wasn't trying, seriously. Trust me. I was trying, but it was because my server was attacked. Yes, attacked. A DOS, Denial of Service attack, which basically means someone or something or a lot of someones or somethings out there had a capability to send a ton of requests to my server all at the same time.

So much, in fact, that it denied access to my server to regular, normal web traffic. So if in the past two weeks you came to my site at SmartPassiveIncome.com or even some of my other websites and businesses, too...yes, most of my websites were down for an entire week. You probably either got an extremely slow website or no website at all.

It was a totally crazy week, especially because you know, as this was happening I was traveling to San Francisco and also from San Francisco or Portland--the timing couldn't have been any better. And obviously, I mean that sarcastically. I could go on and on about this, and actually I did in a blog post I just published not ten minutes ago since starting this recording all about what happened to the server and what happened as a result of the downtime, including an estimated loss of \$12,000--crazy, right?--according to my calculations.

Lots of lessons learned, lots of good things actually that came out of this too, so if you're up to reading that blog post about this whole ordeal, you can go to SmartPassiveIncome.com/server-problems.



Anywho, I'm excited to be back, excited to get the podcast up and rolling again. Due to the downtime I have a number of recordings already made for you, lots of great content, including an interview with Long Tail Pro creator, Spencer Howes from Niche Pursuits.

An interview also with a woman who's self-employed who started a business around potty training babies. Not toddlers...but babies. Like, 6-18 months in age. I can't wait to share that one with you, it's awesome!

And then also a round-table session with my team members, my editor, my videographer and producer for my recent project, [Let Go](#), my book that's coming out later this month that's on a brand new platform called Snippet, and you'll hear more about that at the end of this session, but in that round table session, we talk about where we think publishing seems to be headed, what it was like to manage this project that was SO much more than a book, actually, there's audio and video involved and also social media integration too, and what it's like to work on a brand-new platform. I'm super stoked to share it with you, but again more on that at the end of the program today.

So today here in Session 59, I'm really excited to bring on a guest who is actually someone I kept hearing about on Derek Halpern's website, [Social Triggers](#). You know, in his videos, on his podcast. He's a professor of marketing at Wharton's School at the University of Pennsylvania who just came out with a brand-new book and I was lucky enough to get my hands on an early copy before it was launched, and it was actually a really great, very easy read.

And by easy, I mean it was pleasurable, it was actually really quick and easy to understand, and also easy in the way that it breaks down and organizes thoughts behind why things go viral. The book is called [Contagious: Why Things Catch On](#), by Jonah Berger. So let's welcome Jonah to the SPI Podcast today!

How are you doing today, Jonah?

Jonah: Great, Pat! That's so much for having me!

Pat: It's a real pleasure. Again, I heard of you through Derek Halpern from [SocialTriggers.com](#) many times, so I'm excited to have you on the show.



Now, I'm sure you've been pretty busy lately, especially with your book *Contagious* coming out. Actually...I think it comes out tomorrow, March 5th. Is that correct?

Jonah: Yeah, March 5th in stores everywhere.

Pat: You must be so excited for that! I can't even imagine! How do you feel right now, knowing that your book's coming out tomorrow?

Jonah: I can't wait to go to an actual book store and walk into the front door, go to the front table at Barnes and Noble and actually see it sitting there. It's been a huge labor of love for the past few years, it's coming out in 15 languages. We're really excited about it.

Pat: Awesome. Well, I'm really excited to dive into it, and again, thank you for sharing some of your valuable time with us.

Before we get into *Contagious*, and the subtitle is "Why Things Catch On," tell us a little bit about yourself. Who is Jonah Berger?

Jonah: I am a marketing professor at the Wharton School, and there I teach issues surrounding social influence, so both word of mouth, what we talk about and share, but also traditional social influence. How we persuade others, how that behavior affects other people's behavior, and I mix teaching and research with a little bit of consulting and other sorts of things on the side.

Pat: Nice, very cool. Now, why did you decide to write *Contagious*? In a nutshell, what is it about and why did you decide to write about it?

Jonah: You know, as many people were about a decade ago, I read the book [The Tipping Point](#) and was enthralled by that book. I thought it was an amazing book, an amazing research question--why do things become popular? How do they spread among the population? But I even asked, [inaudible] at the time, sort of, you know, what research has been done in this area that you recommend reading?

And there really wasn't much out there, particularly anything why people talk about and share things. Why things go viral. Why some products get more word of mouth than others. And so that really kicked off a passion for me to study these issues, which took me through both undergraduate and my PHD, and through the research I've done at



Wharton, but all along the way I've felt "Wouldn't it be great to share these ideas with others?"

Often, academic writing is very verbose and difficult to read and hard to understand let alone apply, and I thought "Wouldn't it be great to share these rich and insightful ideas with others so they can use this to help make their own products and ideas more contagious?"

Pat: Yeah, I love it! And I have to say, it is a very easy read, but it's very exciting and useful information. I was on a plane a couple of days ago and I read through a ton of it, as much as I could--like, really, a big chunk of it in a really short period of time, and I appreciate the way that you structured it, and just how easy it is to consume. It's been very useful to me already. It's got my gears turning in my head, and I'm hoping this interview's going to do the same for our audience today.

Now, there's a lot of debate about what makes something go viral or catch on. You know, some think it's just pure luck, and we see that when people just put something online and all of the sudden it explodes.

On the other end of the spectrum, some people believe there's a very specific, exact formula. "Follow these steps, 1, 2, & 3 and you WILL have a viral video or something like that." Where do you and Contagious lie on that spectrum?

Jonah: I think it's not random, and it's not luck, and it's not chance. There's a science behind why people talk about and share things and why things go viral. But that guarantee that if you follow the principals in this book, you can be the next Gangnam Style and have a billion views? Probably not, right?

There's a little bit of magic to that quality. But, just like baseball, or just like any other business activity, what you want to do is increase your batting average. You want to increase the chance that people talk about and share your idea, and these are research based principals to do that.

We've analyzed 7,000 New York Times articles to see what articles make the "Most Emailed" list. We've looked at over 500 brands and understand why certain brands are talked about and shared. We looked at YouTube videos and offline content and a whole host of things, and again and again we found the same principals coming up repeatedly.



It wasn't chance, it wasn't luck. Certain characteristics and ideals and products--B2C things, B2B things, again and again will link to more talking and sharing. And so we thought it would be great to explain these principles and show people how to use them to help their own ideas catch on.

Pat: Right, absolutely. And you sort of break down the book into these different principals and sections. Those sections are Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value and Stories. I've touched on some of these things slightly on the blog before. I talk a lot about using stories as a way to share information and be remembered because people are just born to listen to stories because it gives a personal touch. Emotion because that's what will get people to take action.

But let's start with the first one that you talk about in the book here. Social Currency. What does that mean and give us an example. How does that help something spread, really?

Jonah: I think the idea of social currency is very simply, people talk about things that make them look good. We care about how others think about us, we care about whether others want to be friends with us, whether they want to get to know us better, whether they want to take us out on that second date, and what we talk about and share, just like the cars we drive or the clothes we wear, affect how people feel.

We talk about things that make us look smart and in the know rather than dumb and behind the times. We talk about how we got invited to a special party or we know about a new restaurant that's coming up in the neighborhood. We talk about a new tech gadget that we just got, or recently LinkedIn sent out something to tell people "Hey, you're the top 5% of our profiles on LinkedIn."

People share those things because it makes them look good. It makes them look like they're special people, but along the way they're spreading word of mouth about the products and brands that are a part of those stories.

Pat: Mmhmm. I mean, everyone out there listening right now, just think about the last thing I shared, maybe on Facebook or Twitter, and chances are it's going to be something that was about yourself or that's going to help you in some way. And even if it's about something else, maybe it's a link to a particular article that you liked, it's really--what you're saying, Jonah, is that we're really doing this to not only help people but in fact make ourselves look better. Put ourselves on that stage where "Hey, we're the ones that found this! Check it out!"



Jonah: Yeah. Making an impression and affecting our impression on others. I think one great example that I talk about in the book is in Philadelphia there's a restaurant that has \$100 cheesesteak. It's cheesesteak with lobster and truffles and Kobe beef and it comes with a bottle of Champaign.

The first time you hear about that, you go "Wow! \$100 cheesesteak? That's amazing." If you tried it, you definitely tell other people. You tell other people because it makes you look special and wealthy and high-status to tell about that sort of product.

But even if you HAVEN'T tried it, telling other people about it makes you look cool because you know interesting information. You have access to things that maybe other people don't have access to, and it makes you look smart and entertaining.

Pat: Mmhmm. It's funny you mention that, because just the other day my friend, who frequents Vegas quite a bit, he got comp'd for, you know, X number of dollars that he had to spend from a particular casino, and he sent me a message with an image that was a receipt where he paid, I think it was \$500 for a hamburger from Carl's Jr. I guess they have a Carls. Jr in Vegas that you can buy a hamburger for \$500 and it comes with a bottle of Cristal. That's why it's so expensive.

But that's a perfect example. I mean, he was sharing that not to show off, but because that was cool, but now I know about this and now I'm sharing it on the podcast so now this message is being spread. I love that.

Jonah: I think the funny thing about it is, it's hard to see it ourselves doing this. We all say "I would never do that! I would never talk about things to show off!" But we can easily see it in other people. When our friends do it, when our colleagues do it, when someone tweets "Oh I got upgraded to first class," they're sharing it because they're excited but they're also sharing because they want you to know that they got picked, that they're a special person.

Pat: Absolutely. So from a content creator's point of view, most of us who are listening to this podcast are probably content creators, how can we use social currency--does this mean we charge a ridiculous amount of something just to get it known? Or what's the really underlying motivation there as far as social currency is concerned for content creators?



Jonah: I talk about a few ways to apply this in the book. One way is to make people feel like insiders. That's not necessarily just by making something really expensive, there are other ways to make things scarce or exclusive.

Gmail, for example, when they first came out--not everyone had access to the product. You had to know someone who worked at Google, who had gotten an invitation. So by making it seem really exclusive, it built a name for that product, which encouraged people when it was available to everyone to go snap one up. It felt like they had to get one because it was so exclusive.

Same thing with In-N-Out. In-N-Out has a secret menu that you might've heard of before. And you know, the menu isn't even that secret, but the fact that it seems like it's a secret menu makes people want to talk about and share it because it makes them look cool and in the know. So, one thing is to make people feel like insiders, that they have special information.

Another is to harness the inner remarkability of any product or idea. We think some products are naturally more remarkable. Things like Hollywood movies or, you know, cool Apple gadgets. But other products are not naturally remarkable, like cement or like blenders, let's say.

But a few years ago, and your listeners may be familiar with this, the company Blend Tech put together a campaign called "Will It Blend?" that got people to share millions of times a video which is essentially about a blender. It shows someone dropping an iPhone in a blender and it showed the blender tore that iPhone to shreds. That was pretty remarkable to see! It was AMAZING that a blender could do something like that! Because it was so amazing, people shared it with others because it made them look good.

Again, it was all about finding what that inner product is, not necessarily making it expensive, but what can make people feel like they have access to something special or make them feel like the product is particularly remarkable?

Pat: Yeah, I love that. One of the most recent examples that I've experienced is there's this new iPhone application called Mailbox, which is supposed to revolutionize how we deal with mail through our iPhones or Android phones or whatever. You sign up and then you're put on this list and you say--it says, like, you're 500,000 in line, or something, before you get it. And then it counts down.



I'm just like--I saw everybody--the reason I got that is because I saw other people sharing it and they were like 200,000 in line. So I was like "Oh, I got to get on now before I'm 800,000 in line!"

That's sort of another insider scarcity move that they did. And of course, they can just release the app to everybody if they wanted to. I don't know if there's any other technical reasons they're doing that, but from a marketing standpoint, that's a great idea. And it's just like what you were saying earlier.

Jonah: Yeah, definitely.

Pat: The second one--so that's social currency. Second one is Triggers. What are triggers, and--I think we all have an idea of what are triggers, but specifically for something that goes viral, what is a trigger? What's an example of a trigger that you talk about?

Jonah: So, just to make sure everyone understands what a trigger is, if someone says 'peanut butter and' you might think Jelly. Or if I said "rum and" you might think "Coke." And so the idea there is peanut butter is like a little advertisement for jelly. It's a trigger when you see one thing because you think about a related product or thing.

One of my favorite examples of this is actually the song that came out a few years ago by Rebecca Black. There's a song that was called "Friday." People often say "Oh, this is a terrible song!" Right? If you listen to it, it's about a girl waking up and having breakfast and dealing with those big teenage dilemmas of whether to sit in the front seat or the back seat of her friend's car. It's not really a good song. In fact, some people have called it the worst song of all time--which in itself is sort of an achievement, right? If you can really make the worst song ever, that's pretty impressive.

But even though people are saying this song is so bad, it has over 300 million views. It was one of the most viral videos of 2011. And one question is, why? Why are people talking about and sharing this song?

Well, if you look at the data, you look at the searches on YouTube for Rebecca Black, and you look at them over time, you see there was a big spike of attention and then it started to dwindle or go away. But then it spikes back up and then it dwindles and goes away and then it spikes back up.



And if you look at the spikes, they're not random, they're actually seven days apart. If you look closer, you'll notice that they're on Friday.

And so while the song started equally bad every day of the week, Friday provides a little reminder, a trigger, to make people think about that song. And not only make people think about it but to make them watch it and to make them share it with others.

One reason that song did so well was because it had a prevalent trigger in the environment. Every week, one day of the week reminded people to think about it and pass it on.

Pat: Mmhmm. Do you think...I'm trying to think of an example that I have used that I have spread around based on something that I do, and that is "[Be everywhere](#)." This is this marketing strategy that I have where you don't just put yourself on your blog, you put yourself on your blog, on a YouTube channel and on a podcast, and with those three mediums you can take your brand to the next level and reach more people at the same time.

I've noticed a ton of people following this same path after I did a presentation about this in BlogWorld expo in LA a couple of years ago, and now what people are saying is that "Oh, this person is doing Pat's "be everywhere" strategy" or someone sees someone start a podcast and share YouTube videos at the same time, "Oh, that's Pat's be everywhere strategy."

So for us content creators I really feel naming stuff is very important. Seth Godin talks about this a lot. When you put a name to something and that name is attributed to you, that becomes a trigger, or something that represents you. even though it might be going on somewhere else. Does that make sense?

Jonah: Yeah, exactly. I mean I think we often think about social currency is, I think, something marketers think about, right? "I need to make my idea remarkable, I need to make it sexy. I need to make it exciting." But I think marketers think less about triggers. Not just what something that is great about you, but what's going to make people think about you even when you're not around? What's a cue or a trigger in the environment that when they see it, they can't get you out of their head? And so I think it's really important not just to be a remarkable idea but be something that's triggered by the surrounding environment.



Pat: Right, absolutely. Let's move on to the next one, emotion. Obviously emotion plays a huge role on why people share stuff, especially when it comes to things that are political or...those are the kinds of posts that notice that are being shared on Facebook quite a bit. Stuff that's political stuff that's controversial, stuff that will get people to really share their true, deep down opinions. Can you expand on emotion a little bit, as far as stuff that goes viral?

Jonah: Sure. You might think that all emotion increases sharing, right? And indeed, there definitely are some emotions that increase sharing. When we feel excited about something, when we get a new promotion we love to tell everyone. Or as you just said, maybe we're really angry about a political issue, we share that information. YouTube videos benefit from how funny they are so maybe humor also drives sharing.

But when you think about it, it's then just that positive or negative drives sharing. The emotions we just talked about, some of them are positive, like excitement or humor, and some of them are negative like anger. So it's not just positivity or negativity. Are all emotions leading people to share? Or does some increase sharing and some decrease sharing?

And what we've found, in our [offices?] of over six months of New York Times articles is that it's not just the valiance of the emotion, the positivity or the negativity, but also whether those emotions activate or arouse the reader. Whether they get your blood flowing, whether they get your pulse quickening, your heart beating faster, they activate or deactivate you.

If you think about anger versus sadness, both of those are negative emotions, neither of those feel very good, but anger is an activating negative emotion. When you're angry you want to do something. Throw something at the television, you want to yell at that customer service representative.

When you're sad, you sort of want to power down. You want to curl up under the covers, or put on your favorite sweat shirt or eat a big bowl of ice cream under the covers. Because of that sadness, because it's deactivating, actually decreases sharing.

So we found in our research is it's not just positive increases sharing and negative decreasing it, but that the higher arousal emotions, things like positive emotions like excitement or like amusement, humor, increase sharing, but also negative emotions like anger and anxiety. Whereas emotions that deactivate us, negative emotions like sadness but also positive emotions like contentment, lead to less sharing.



So it's really thinking about how activated the emotion that you're evoking makes people feel.

Pat: I really like that choice of words: activated. What can you do as a content creator, as someone who creates a podcast or writes blog posts or creates videos to actually activate your audience? I always talk about how you want to get your audience involved with what you're doing, and I think activate is probably an even better word. Getting them off of their seats almost and start to speak up and share and be almost a part of it, of whatever it is that they're sharing.

Jonah: Definitely. I think a big thing online as well as offline, particularly for small businesses, is turning customers into advocates. Turning people who already liked your product, turn them into advocates that would create new users, create that [inaudible] of user growth. But to get that to happen, you have to figure out how to get those existing users, those people that like your product to engage and involve themselves, but also bring in new users as well.

Pat: Absolutely. And there's probably--I mean, that in itself could be an entire podcast episode about.

Now let's move on because I know we're--you obviously have a lot of stuff going on, and we have three more things in the sections of your book. Public. When you talked about this in your book, it reminded me of social proof. The fact that's one person--you see a group of people using something or talking about something, that automatically makes you want to be involved with that, too, or use that thing. And you give the example, you start out talking about Steve Jobs here, and I love this example about the logo. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Jonah: The Steve Job logo [inaudible]

Pat: Yep.

Jonah: Yeah. So, I think this has been a great example and a very simple example that involves social proof and public.

A number of years ago, Jobs was dealing with a particular issue with their laptop. Very simple issue, but an important one. Apple had always designed their products with the user in mind. They want it to be as easy as possible and as beneficial to users as



possible. Everything from the customer service to the way, when you open your iPhone box it feels were all designed with the customer in mind.

And the laptop was the same way. When you take the laptop out of your bag, the problem is, well, which way should face you? Which way has the latch on it to open up? You face the wrong way, you have to turn it around. Not a big issue, but easily solved by design. They put a logo on the top and they had that logo like a compass. You took the laptop out of your bag, and it was closed and the logo was facing you, it was the right side, you could open it right up.

That was great, it made it really easy for users, but Jobs found that there was one problem--when people opened up the laptop, the logo was actually upside down. Everyone else had a harder time seeing the logo.

So while they usually made the customer first, that idea that the customer's always right, you know, we should fit around the customer, in this case they actually flipped the logo. They turned it from facing the customer to facing the audience, because they wanted to make it easier to see which laptop people are using.

And that, very simply, is just the idea of public that we talk about in the book--we tend to imitate others, right? When you don't know what to do, we tend to look to others for information, but if we can't see what they're doing, it's really hard to imitate. And so to make that social influence work, we have to make the private public. We have to make it easier to see other's behavior.

Pat: Absolutely. There's some sort of intuitive part of being a human is just wanting to be part of a group, and when you see a group of people doing something or--I mean, I think you used the example, and I heard this example before, of you're looking for a place to eat and you're not sure where to go, but you notice the restaurant with the longest line. Obviously, that group of people there, you don't even know who they are, but because they're all there together at that one particular restaurant, there MUST be something great about that particular restaurant.

That's why I feel like social proof is an incredibly important part of doing business online, but it can also hurt you too because you can also share things that might make you not as favorable as you'd like. A lot of people will--they see big bloggers put their subscriber count at the top of their sites so they'll do it too, but then it only shows there's 50 people following them and you don't really want to...



Jonah: Haha, right!

Pat: You don't want to showcase that right away, so you want to approach your stuff in a way as if you're an outsider. If you were to see 50 people following your site, it may not be a good thing.

But really--and you can be creative as far as social proof is concerned. IT's not just about how many comments you have on your post or how many people have downloaded your email list, but there's a lot of--it's really niche dependent, but there's a lot of different ways you can use social proof to really take your message to the next level and have people spread the word about you even more.

Jonah: Definitely. We can think about it in the offline world examples that use color for instance. Some companies, rather than have their product delivered in a usual brown box have it delivered in a green box that has their logo on the outside, which encourages everyone to see what kind of products someone got delivered and encourages them to do the same thing. So it's just all about making it more visible that people like your product or like your idea.

Pat: Yeah. I think--you know, Derek uses the example, the white headphones that Apple uses, too. Going back to another Apple example. and I know it's kind of cliché to use Apple as an example sometimes, but it's so perfect here because when you--I mean, this goes back to triggers, too.

When you walk around and you see people wearing the white headphones, you know that's an Apple product, but it's also social proof for that particular person that "Oh, Apple's--" You see everybody wearing them, so that's trigger and social proof for Apple, and it almost makes you want to go and get one yourself because you want to be cool like everybody else. Just like those commercials with the colored background and the white silhouette dancing with the white earphones. It's all choreographed very well.

Jonah: Yes. Definitely.

Pat: A couple more. Let's talk about practical value now. This sounds obvious as far as what gets shared. Obviously, you want it to have value. But define practical value. What does that mean to you, exactly, and how does it help us?

Jonah: I think the idea of practical value is just very simply useful information. News that you or someone else can use. People often want to help others, as you noted, so



things that save them time, things that saves them money, makes them healthier. If you're a [inaudible] sunscreen, some friend of yours might send you an article about the best sunscreen. If they know you're buying a car, reviews about a particular car. If they know you're into restaurants, they might send you restaurant reviews. All of these are things that make your life better and easier.

In terms of applying these concepts, you need to think about "Well, how is your product or idea useful and how can you create--" and we'll talk about in the story, [inaudible] story, it shows how practically valuable you are to others.

And because you're providing a service, it helps people solve a problem. How can you craft a narrative that shows your potential audience members "Hey, this is so useful! [Inaudible] ...this product helped me solve a problem, how it made my life better." And if they agree that it is useful information people will share it because they want to make others better off.

Pat: Yeah, I think that's very important. Although this sounds very simple and almost obvious, a lot of people, especially online marketers and people doing business online, they think too much about what the product is and what the service is about and not the benefits that they can give to whoever's consuming that product or information.

And this really comes down to the difference between features and benefits. A lot of people will go days and days and days talking about the features of something, because that's probably what they spent most of their time building or making sure worked or whatever, but it's really what does that feature DO, or how can that feature help whoever it is that's going to be consuming that information and product.

One trick that I like to use is the "so that" test. You know, if you can--if you have a feature and then you follow it up by "so that" and you can answer that final part of that question or fill in the blank, that's how you know what the value is. Or if that thing may even have any sort of value.

So my product has X, so that Y. And if you can't answer that Y, then you might have a problem. So really thinking about the end user first, and really just how impractical--I mean it even comes down to what you said, time, help and money. Those are some of the triggers people have and that ties into emotion and a lot of the other things you were talking about.



Jonah: And it's really, I think, subtle. To some people a very important point, but difference between feature and benefit. I mean, people don't like to seem like a walking advertisement. They're not going to go on and on about the features of the product. But they will go on and on about how the product made them better off, talking about the benefits of the product. And along the way they're starting word of mouth about that product.

[00:30:37.15] **Pat:** Absolutely.

Finally, you talk about stories, and stories is one of my favorite topics to talk about, just because stories is what got me inspired to do business online. It was an interview I heard of a guy who started teaching me the project management exam and his story that got me really inspired was also the story from a guy named Shawn Nunan, who he and his wife were making a living by teaching people how to speak Indonesian through their site learningindonesian.com. That story is still implanted in my head, and that inspired me to go down this route.

Now, you talk about stories and you give a number of different stories. Obviously in the other sections stories is what makes this book and those sections memorable, but also you dedicate a chapter--and I think it's really cool how this is the very last chapter that push everything together.

You talk about something called a Trojan Horse, as far as stories are concerned. And we all, I think a lot of us know the story of the Trojan horse and what that was like. But you know, using stories as a technique such as the Trojan Horse was a technique. Tell us about what that means, exactly.

Jonah: Yeah. As you [inaudible], stories are really important. But I think one detail that this chapter had is that stories often carry something inside them just like a Trojan Horse. There's often a candy shell or an exterior that's either practically useful information or something that has social conceit, but along the way the grander the benefit comes along for the ride.

So we can think of, for example, you know, the Will It Blend example that I like a lot, that I think we talked about briefly. The fact that a blender can cut through an iPhone, isn't that amazing? People share that because it's a remarkable product, they can't believe that a blender can do that, but along the way--they're not advertising, that's not their goal, but along the way they're sharing the Blend Tech name, and talking about



the benefits of the product, how strong that product is. How amazingly strong that product is. How it can cut through anything.

And so while they're not trying to advertise, they're sharing information because it's hidden inside the story or narrative.

Things about Subway. Subway had that ad campaign a few years ago, and the story went around about Jared, this guy that lost 200 pounds basically by eating Subway sandwiches. Was way overweight, he started going on a Subway diet, he ate Subway for lunch and dinner, he lost all this weight on Subway sandwiches.

People don't like being a walking advertisement for Subway, but they will share this story about this guy who lost 200 pounds by eating sub sandwiches. That's an amazing story, it's a remarkable story, but it's also a Trojan horse for the Subway brand. Along the way, people are talking about Subway and they're talking about the benefits that Subway provides, how they have healthy subs that can help you lose weight.

It's all about not only trading a story but wrapping that story around you. By wrapping that narrative around your brand or benefit, people can't help but talking about your brand or benefit along the way while they're sharing this great narrative.

Pat: Did you purposefully choose the word "Trojan" because that's also the name of a virus? And you're talking about...

Jonah: [laughs] I didn't!

Pat: Stuff going viral?

Jonah: That's really clever. I'm unfortunately not that clever. You are cleverer than I am. I didn't think about that.

Pat: I was going to say, that was awesome. I love little Easter eggs like that. So you can feel free to say you did that.

Jonah: I will borrow that from you, thank you!

Pat: You're welcome! But I really like that, but your story about Jared, talking about the Subway story with Jared reminds me of the story that I tell about Joe Cross from Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead who was extremely overweight as well, but did a 60 day



juicing fast--just drinking the whole time, he didn't chew for 60 days--he lost a ton of weight, he got rid of his chronic skin disease, and he told that story through a documentary, that was his story.

What I also love about stories is it really gets you invested as a listener, or vested, and you become emotionally tied to these people when they tell a good story, obviously. There's bad stories and good stories, but this was a good story. And what ended up happening is this "Trojan Horse" of a story got me to buy a juicer not within 30 minutes of watching that documentary.

Jonah: Oh, wow!

Pat: Yeah. I literally had a receipt from Amazon for a Brevil juicer, the same exact one that he used, because I wanted to get the same health benefits. I mean, I wasn't that overweight but I have been juicing ever since and I love it and so now I'm spreading the story and this particular story is now my Trojan horse for people to go buy a Brevil juicer. I don't know.

But I get what you're saying, and that's so true.

Jonah: I think that's a perfect example, again, of if he instead had said "Buy this juicer, it's so great, you should buy this juicer" you probably would've been turned off right? It would've sounded too much like an advertisement; you would've not been interested in the juicer. But the fact that it told a story encouraged you to listen and pay attention and got you to buy in the end.

Pat: Yeah, absolutely. And I know for me personally that I have a great story as far as how I came to be...you know, how I was laid off and just almost accidentally started this website teaching people how to pass an exam in the architecture industry and exploded and I know that's a good story, and I know it is--I don't want to say a Trojan horse, because that almost has a negative connotation to it, especially for tech geeks and stuff like that.

But it is my way of introducing my stuff and what I do and what I teach people in a way that can connect with people through that story. Not just "Hey, come to my site and learn how to make online business!" It's "this is my story, this is how I did it, maybe you can use some of my examples and do it yourself, too."

Jonah: Exactly. Yeah, I think it's a great example.



Pat: So Jonah, we just touched the surface on Contagious. I really recommend this book for everybody. It's, again, a quick but amazing and very informative read. And I can't wait to share it with everybody.

Jonah, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing everything with us. If there's--besides getting the book Contagious, where else can people find out more about you?

Jonah: We've built a website, jonahberger.com, which in addition to telling people about the book and where they can get it actually has a bunch of free, online resources to help you not only read the book, but apply the concepts from the book. So we have a work book that helps people work through each of the steps in the book and how they can apply it into their business. We have a one-pager reference guide, and a host of other content that can help people out. So that's it, just jonahberger.com.

Also if people are interested they can follow me at Twitter, I'm [@j1berger](https://twitter.com/j1berger) there, and tweet about everything related to word of mouth and virality but also consumer behavior more broadly.

Pat: Awesome, love it Jonah. Thank you so much and good luck with the book launch and I'm sure we'll cross paths again soon.

Jonah: Pat, thanks so much for having me. I really appreciate it.

Pat: Thank you, take care.

All right, thank you all for listening to today's session and interview with Jonah Berger, author of Contagious. Like I said, I definitely recommend it and you can get your copy through my link at smartpassiveincome.com/contagious. That is an Amazon affiliate link, so if you go through that link I will get a small commission. And of course, I thank you for that.

I also wanted to share a new website I created. Yes, a NEW website, which I'm really stoked about, actually. This website was created as a result of all the new projects I have going on this year. And planning ahead for the future. It's a personal website you can find at patflynn.me.



I actually tried to get patflynn.com, and the guy who owns it--he's super nice, obviously he has a pretty cool name, and he's sticking with it, and I respect him for that. I even offered quite a bit of money for it. We're talking high 4 figures for this site, and not an inch of budge. So again, to that Pat Flynn, awesome, keep doing what you're doing.

So I figured that patflynn.me is the next best thing! So if you go there, you'll be met with a nice, responsive WordPress theme design, so check it out on your mobile phones and your iPads too.

And please make sure to check out the [Let Go](#) project that's currently featured on that site. Again, this is the book that's coming out later this month. If you're not listening this in the future and it's out already. It's a book that's being launched on a brand new publishing platform called [Snippet](#). I'm honored, completely honored, to be one of the first few authors to be publishing on this revolutionary platform that combines the best worlds of books and blogging. Like books there are chapters in each snippet that you read. However, each chapter is limited to only 1000 words, so like blogs, it's a quick and easy, digestible read.

In addition to that, and my absolute favorite part of this entire thing, is that these books, these Snippets, incorporate what they call Discoverables. So while you're reading, you may find a relevant video or audio or images that pop up. And it also integrates social media, which is really cool.

This is why I was in San Francisco last week, because I was actually filming video footage for Discoverables within the Snippet book. Again, the name of mine is called Let Go. So no matter when you are listening to this, I encourage you to visit PatFlynn.met/letgo, no spaces, and you'll see either the teaser trailer which is available now at the time of this recording or it might be the full legend trailer, and of course access to the Snippet when it becomes available. So I hope you check it out if you have a chance. If you do, I hope it inspires you in some way.

Show notes for this podcast session can be found at smartpassiveincome.com/session59, and here's to you and your success. I will see you in session #60. Peace!

[00:40:42.21] **Announcer:** Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income Podcast at www.smartpassiveincome.com!