



SPI Podcast Session #107 - How a Small Blog about Food Became a Big Deal with Lisa and Jason from 100 Days of Real Food

show notes at: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session107>

Pat Flynn: This is The Smart Passive Income Podcast with Pat Flynn Session #107.

Intro: Welcome to The Smart Passive Income Podcast where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now your host, his definition of success is playing with his kids, Pat Flynn!

Pat Flynn: Hey, what's up everybody? Pat Flynn here and welcome to episode 107. I hope you enjoyed listening to my kids there. My son saw me getting behind the mic again and was like, "Daddy, can I come on and talk again to all your friends?" And I was like, "Sure!" So I brought him on and I also wanted to bring on my daughter who is talking a lot and actually forming sentences now. She's only a year and a half and she's doing really well. So I wanted to introduce you to her for the first time and I'm sure they'll both be on the show in the future.

But anyway, let's get right to today's episode which is an interview with Lisa and Jason Leake, a wife and husband combo who has started a business at 100DaysofRealFood.com. And they shared their story, how they got started and how things started to explode for them and how they're taking advantage of that now and making good money and passive income and building even more traffic and getting more exposure including in mainstream media as well which I'm really excited to share with you.

Now, I didn't even know I was doing this but the last couple of episodes and even a number of the episodes that I have coming in the future that have already been recorded, they are success stories like this in niches that are not the how to start a blog, how to start an online business, how to become an entrepreneur type space. And these have been the most popular interviews in the past.

There were a number of them in the past that I have done that people just seem to resonate with because I think you're more able to connect with people like this as opposed to interviews with people like Tim Ferriss or Gary Vaynerchuck. And as much as I love both of those guys, a lot of people feel like they can't relate to them or they're



just way above where we're all at. And I feel the same way sometime. So that's why I love interviews like this.

So let's just get right into today's interview. Again, this is Lisa and Jason Leake from 100DaysOfRealFood.com.

All right. What's up everybody? I'm here with Lisa and Jason from 100DaysOfRealFood.com. Welcome both of you to the show.

Lisa Leake: Thanks for having us.

Jason Leake: Thanks Pat. It's quite an honor to be here.

Pat Flynn: Jason, you emailed me actually in December talking about your success story that both of you have created together with 100 Days of Real Food and I'm really excited to get into the journey. And I just want to start, Lisa, you started your blog. I want to talk about what were you doing before that and then what made you decide to start the blog.

Lisa Leake: OK. Well, I was years ago working for Bank of America, just a typical corporate job. And then actually got laid off which I was really excited about because I really wanted to be an at home mom and it was just kind of hard to take the plunge and give up that full-time salary. So it was nice to have the benefits of a severance package.

And so sometime after that in early 2010, I just had a big wake-up call about the food we were eating. We were basically eating just like any typical American family. And I watched Michael Pollan talked about where our food comes from on an *Oprah* episode and it was just a huge wake-up call for me because I had no idea where our food came from. And it was the start of a complete overhaul of our diets. We thought we were eating fairly healthy but it was actually very highly processed. So that's really what started it all. And then friends were asking me questions and wanting to know what changes we were making.

And so, one friend suggested I start a blog and I thought that was ridiculous. I was not going to do it. And I sat on it for about a week and then I was like, "Oh, what the heck! Maybe I will." And so, it just kind of grew from there.



Pat Flynn: Well, why did you think it was ridiculous to start a blog? Because I know a lot of people feel that way too.

Lisa Leake: Well, because I'm not a writer. I always did much better at math than English. And so, I was definitely concerned about putting my words out there in writing. And so, I actually did pull Jason in from the very beginning and said, "Before I publish any of this, you have to read it." He's very good about knowing like where the commas go and correct grammars. So that was something I was very apprehensive about. And I actually recently found a very old email that I wrote a friend about on my first post and I was like, "This feels so weird but here's goes nothing." So it was definitely strange at first.

Pat Flynn: And this was back in 2010 you said.

Lisa Leake: Yes. And technically, in May was when we started our 100-day pledge.

Pat Flynn: OK, cool. Jason, what did you feel about Lisa's sort of wanting to go on this journey and start a blog? What did you feel about it at the time when it started?

Jason Leake: Well, I was totally supportive but I really didn't want it to be a slippery slope. I mean I was trying to succeed in my corporate job at the time in technical sales and I traveled a lot. And so again, totally supportive but very limited on what help I would provide at the time. I was basically editor only. But once it got really busy and she came to me for help and when we saw the traffic that she had then I started to monetize and really started seeing the opportunity, totally changed my tune and got really into it and just got more and more involved.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. That was a wake-up call number two.

Pat Flynn: So let's talk about that traffic. You said it started to get really busy, Lisa. So when did traffic start to sort of – when did traffic start to come to your site? You started it in May. How long until you started to see results? Did you ever feel like you were just doing something that you maybe shouldn't be doing?

Lisa Leake: Well, not – well, I felt like the 100-day pledge itself at times, I questioned that just because I was like limiting the diet of my children and there were challenges. So that was something I questioned but not necessarily blogging about it and just keeping it real and sharing the journey. And so, I started in May and I remember saying to Jason, "Hey, I have like 50 emails subscribers. Isn't that awesome?" And he said to



me, "Well, that's really just the low-hanging fruit." And that was kind of crushed me a little bit. But it's kind of like that advice that helps push you a little further.

So then I had this idea that I really wanted to have a newspaper article about what we were doing. For some reason, that was just this goal I had in mind and I wanted to work towards it. And I got our local Charlotte Observer to agree to do a story on us at the 50-day mark, and that came out – I can't remember the exact month but just a couple of months into it. And when the story came out, I felt like that is what put us on the map. I mean that – it was a really nice big spread and then people would say, "Oh yeah, you were the one I saw on the paper."

And then Food Inc is a pretty popular documentary that at the time had like a hundred thousand Facebook followers which at the time was a lot and they picked up the story and that was really just like my first big bump in traffic and of course I retained some of it from there but that was what helped kind of kick things off.

Pat Flynn: That's really cool. That's actually something I've been hearing a lot more of lately is people sort of using their local media to get started and just to kind of put themselves on the map. And I think that's a strategy that a lot of people don't really think about because we think we have to do everything just online and Facebook and social media and all that stuff. But these media companies, they are always looking for new stories.

Lisa Leake: Absolutely.

Pat Flynn: And of course, they picked you guys up. Now before we move on, could we just talk about what the site is about? I mean what is 100 Days of Real Food for?

Lisa Leake: Well again, I got a big wake-up call about the way we were eating and so I did slowly start to just cut out processed food. But I wanted to actually blog about it in a way that would draw attention to how dependent so many Americans have become on highly processed food. I mean many people are just like listening to the big food companies and not really understanding what's in the food that they're eating.

So originally when I was just kind of making changes, I thought, "Well, this isn't really a new story." So I said to Jason one night, "What if we decided to come up with some rules and all of four of us go on this – follow these strict rules for 100 days and blog about it because I don't think you should be so strict for life. But it was just kind of an experiment to see if it could be done. I thought I would blog for 100 days and move on



with my life after that to be honest. But I just – I’m still here, almost four years later with – it turned into a place to share recipes and stories and tips and information. And now, I actually have a cookbook coming out August 26th with 100 recipes as well. So it just turned into so much more. It’s just a hot topic right now.

Pat Flynn: That’s really cool. Congratulations.

Lisa Leake: Thank you.

Pat Flynn: And we look forward to that cookbook for sure. Now Jason, when did you start taking sort of a more – I don’t want to say serious role but actually putting more time and effort into what Lisa had already started? When did this actually turn into a business?

Jason Leake: Well, that was January of 2012 so this would be about I guess 21 months into her blogging journey. And honestly, the traffic was just getting so high at that time and she had gone to a blogging conference which I think everybody should do. It’s just opened her eyes to the possibilities.

Pat Flynn: Which conference was that? I’m sorry.

Jason Leake: It was BlogHer Food.

Pat Flynn: Oh, OK. I know BlogHer, yeah.

Jason Leake: Yeah. And so at that time, she was getting I guess around a million page views a month.

Lisa Leake: Well, it was like a couple hundred thousand a month in 2011. And then what happened because January is such a peak time for this information, my traffic literally doubled from 500,000 page views a month in December to a million page views a month in January of 2012. And that’s when I went – I had no help other than tech help and that’s when I went to him and was like, “You have got to help me. I’m drowning.”

Pat Flynn: A million page views?

Lisa Leake: Yeah, isn’t that right, Jason?



Jason Leake: Yeah. Actually, I'm working on a presentation so I got the numbers right here in front of me.

Lisa Leake: I'm just going from memory.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, share as many numbers as you can.

Jason Leake: OK. Well, earlier we're talking about the local media coverage so if I could speak a minute about the growth in traffic?

Pat Flynn: Please.

Jason Leake: I call that effect really like the upward spiral. So you get some credibility and some mentions in local media and then now you have again more credibility so you can get interviews or maybe now you're in a magazine. And so now, you are in a place where you could be seen by influential people. In case in point, around that time in like spring of 2011, she was seeing around 200,000 page views a month which is great in and of itself. But then 100 Days of Real Food landed on the Yahoo homepage in between a picture of Justin Bieber and President Obama.

Lisa Leake: I'll never forget.

Jason Leake: I hope there's a screenshot of that.

Lisa Leake: Oh yeah, lots of them.

Jason Leake: Yeah. Actually, I started my own blog in November called Pro Blog School and there's a whole story about that there. But at any rate, of course, the server crashed. We had no idea that was going to happen but we ended up seeing 1.1 million page views for that month because of that. And we retained a lot of those people. They liked what they saw. So we're at about half a million page views a month after that and climbing until again it doubled in January. So really important to start small and just claw your way up.

Pat Flynn: That's crazy. I mean in terms of income and you don't have to share exact numbers but how well is the site doing now for you guys?

Jason Leake: Well, it's phenomenal.



Lisa Leake: Well – but I’ll say at that time from like that big jump from a half million to a million in January, I wasn’t really making – I was making about a \$100 a month. It was really nothing. But that’s the point in time that Jason thought, “Hey, look at how much traffic we have. We could really do something awesome with this.”

Jason Leake: Yeah. And actually, a funny little story, Pat, a little story related to you. This was when I was introduced to you. So that was like March of 2012, I was just trying to get my head around ad networks and how to monetize and affiliate marketing through Amazon and so forth because we started monetizing really late in the game that a half a million turned to a million page views.

But anyway, we were sitting on the back deck and a neighbor, a new neighbor walked through the backyard and just introduced himself. We started talking and he found out that we work online. He said, “Hey, have you heard about Pat Flynn and Smart Passive Income?” And I said, “No.” So it was word of mouth advertising and real feedback. You’ll never see that on a screen report somewhere.

Pat Flynn: I have to think him.

Jason Leake: Yeah, yeah. So anyway, so of course I checked you out and I saw your income report and I was just floored.

Lisa Leake: It was a complete game-changer.

Jason Leake: And not so much because we thought, “Oh, we’ll be making \$50,000 a month.” But I will say, we’ve had a Pat Flynn month before or two or so. But at any rate, it was more Lisa and I as business partners getting on the same page that, “Hey, there is true opportunity here. We need to really work on this.” But do it in a way where we keep true to her ideals on the site and keep the customers – keep the values that the customers want.

Pat Flynn: Sure.

Lisa Leake: And that’s why it took us so long to monetize because that was not – I didn’t start it for that reason or that purpose at all. I never in a million years thought it would be our full time family business so that’s why it took us so long.

Pat Flynn: Now, what was the strategy after you saw the income report and you’re like, “OK, let’s do this. Let’s do it the right way. What we’re your first steps from there?”



How did you make sure you also stay on track and stay true to your audience? Because I know a lot of people especially people who have sudden burst of traffic. They all of a sudden just start throwing mad ads and it just becomes a mess and then they lose their audience.

Lisa Leake: We might have done that a little bit.

Jason Leake: Yeah. So who was it? What's the website we saw? Oh yeah, we saw Young House Love, another couple blogger and they just had a ton of ads on their site. I mean we love those guys. I'm not bad-mouthing them but ...

Lisa Leake: I think they've changed it.

Jason Leake: Yeah, they've since changed it too. But – so we did – we put some ads on the site. We started selling some ads. We actually hired a sales manager to help with that because we realized it's a lot of work. We had ad networks, Amazon affiliate partnership, and we quickly realized like, "OK, the site it too cluttered." So we took a lot of it down. But that was the real strategy was passive income. It's like, "OK, we have this traffic which a lot of people would kill to have." And so I wanted stuff that was automatic. And so ...

Lisa Leake: But I think we could stay true to ourselves because we are like split. That's Jason's side of things and I don't even have to – it's not that I don't have like a good business sense because trust me, I will insert and affiliate link when appropriate. But I still just do my job of sharing content, interacting with the readers, what started the whole. And he is like the whole other side. So I think that helps.

Jason Leake: Yeah. And with the ad networks and the ad calculator estimated last year, we probably left \$60,000 on the table because we don't run processed food or pharmaceutical ads because they are contrary to our message. And I'm working currently on optimizing our ad networks, folding in multiple premium networks and it's really, really difficult because not many people will allow you to filter the way I need to.

Pat Flynn: So let's talk about those ad networks. Can you explain to somebody who doesn't really know what that means how it works?

Jason Leake: Yeah. I'm about to publish an ads 101 post and a one or two behind it but basically, you can sell ad yourself which would mean you put an image on your sidebar for example for whatever you feel is appropriate, maybe it's 50 bucks when



you're starting out but that's really a whole lot of work to manage that and you would be finding people yourself. So you can use an ad network. So they give you a piece of code and then it's kind of like having a TV screen on the side of your blog. And they then control the programming. They're showing commercials to your readers essentially and then they're giving you a revenue share on that.

Lisa Leake: But they don't have to click on it. They just have to land on your page. They didn't have to look at it to be honest.

Pat Flynn: Oh wow! OK. So it's a ...

Jason Leake: So it's just display advertising. I mean we – I guess to back up, we make money primarily in three ways. One is just through using ad networks to display advertising.

Lisa Leake: And how many boxes do we have now? Five, right?

Jason Leake: I think we have about five. Yeah.

Pat Flynn: Yeah. I'm on the homepage right now. Again, this is a 100DaysofRealFood.com. And I don't even see any ads above the fold.

Jason Leake: No, we don't have any above the fold. We never have.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. I mean some people, they throw it above their header. And again, I mean we could maybe make more money if we did that but it just didn't feel right to us.

Pat Flynn: Love it.

Jason Leake: Right. And so, the other way is we have sponsorship packages. So we have a sales manager. So there's a couple little ad zones which she can sell but then it also includes things like a blog shout-out or perhaps a Facebook mention because Lisa has a very large Facebook following. It's currently about 1.3 million likes. But we always identify sponsors as sponsors and we vet sponsors very heavily – as you do with affiliate partners. We only introduce things to our audience that we think will be of value or that we've used and personally endorse typically.



Pat Flynn: Great. So I'm just taking notes here. Wow! OK. Facebook page – well OK, going back a little bit, Jason, you said ad networks, sponsorships packages which include maybe some spots on the site as well as some shout-outs on blog post and stuff and maybe social media. You said there was a third way.

Jason Leake: Yeah. The third way is affiliate income and it's mainly through Amazon. And so, our income, I mean it depends on time of year, but it's roughly split one third for each of those three main revenue streams. And then we just experimented with our own product. In January, we sold a school lunch meal plan for two weeks only and that was a great success.

So for anyone out there that's starting out monetizing, it can be a lot of work to create your own product but it's profitable and it's something you can do without a really large – without a lot of traffic basically.

Pat Flynn: Was that like an e-book or something?

Lisa Leake: Pretty much. And I was only allowed to sell it for two weeks just because my publisher doesn't want it to compete with my cookbook that's coming out later this year.

Pat Flynn: Interesting. Very cool. Yeah. And we'll talk about how that book deal came about in a second. But I want to go back to this 1.3 million Facebook likes. Was that all organic and just through the content that you have written?

Lisa Leake: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: So no paid advertising or anything like that?

Lisa Leake: No. I have never paid for advertising in any form ever. So yeah, it's all organic. At times, I thought I knew where it's coming from and most other times, I had no idea where it was coming from. Occasionally, I'll be like, "Where did they find the page from?" I mean I think just different methods. But what I did early on, actually I remember very early on staying up one night, all night to get this thing done because I was so determined. But I created some meal plans.

Another blogger, 5 Dollar Dinners mama, I gave her a shout-out. She actually said to me, "people, they don't know how to eat this way. If you made like a meal plan with exactly what to eat and a grocery list with exactly what to buy, they will be all over it."



So I did exactly that. And the complicated part was like the technical side of getting it to be a fan gate to like my Facebook page so they could get it. So I did that but I didn't just put it out there and then hope for the best. I actually was very proactive about writing guest posts on other people's sites and then I would be sure to mention my free meal plan to get them started.

And I remember back in the day when I maybe only had a couple of thousand Facebook fans, getting like thousands at a time within a week period these guest posts. So that kind of got the ball rolling. And as Jason says, it's just – once you have so many then you're starting to get that many new fans each week without anything extra.

Pat Flynn: Right. I love that strategy. I think there's like the guest posting aspect which is really important. It helps put your brand in front of somebody else's and you have that sort of trust factor, somebody is sort of endorsing you to write on their blog which then – you're using Facebook to collect leads and get likes that way, right?

Lisa Leake: Yes.

Pat Flynn: You're driving people from the guest post to Facebook to not only like the page but – do they also get on your email list at the same time?

Lisa Leake: Well, then later I added – I actually have five free email plans the fifth one is you have to get on my email list to get that. So that kind of came later, hindsight is 20/20, right? So Facebook has not been all good. Lately, it actually hasn't been as great after the last algorithm changes and I got hit pretty hard by those earlier this year in mid-January. So I kind of wished I would have done that with the email list sooner. But I still will never – I love interacting with people on Facebook.

There are so many things you can do on social media that you just can't do on an email list like share just randomly what I had for lunch. And I can push stuff out five times a day where our email newsletter goes out once a week. So it's not as good as it used to be but I still – I just truly enjoy it and I'm overflowing with things to share on Facebook all the time for some reason. So I'm very authentic on there.

Pat Flynn: What's working best for you on Facebook right now? Like I know there's obviously tons of different things you could share. What seems to be getting the most traction?



Lisa Leake: Well, I hate to have to – that I have to resort to this but just doing a good old teaser saying – not giving it all away on the Facebook post but saying, “Gosh, I can’t believe that I ever hesitated doing number one on this list.” And then putting it out there and I hate that tactic so I try to still be like classy when I do it but I’ve been experimenting a lot but that does that work.

Pat Flynn: It does. A lot of those big sort of viral type sites like Viral Nova, they use those types of headlines on every post.

Lisa Leake: Yeah, I try not to it that much.

Jason Leake: It’s kind of like the boy who cried wolf. It goes too far. But just perfect example last night. We had 4,000 people at lunch right after her Facebook post because she did a teaser post instead of a regular one.

Lisa Leake: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: Four thousand people, that’s crazy. At the same time.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. But that’s not our record.

Jason Leake: The record I think is what? Nine thousand?

Lisa Leake: Something like eight or nine.

Pat Flynn: Nine thousand, what caused that?

Lisa Leake: That was a teaser.

Pat Flynn: That was a teaser. Through social media or like an email?

Lisa Leake: Yes, through Facebook. And I will say, that was like a Saturday which is the lowest day of traffic. I feel like all those rules, I never follow the rules. They say, “Only have short post and only do this and do a picture.” I don’t follow any rules. I just post what I want like whatever is on my mind and if it’s long, it’s long. And so this was like probably the worst day of the week to post anything and it was a very authentic post but it was something about like what my daughter had done earlier that day and at the last minute, I was like, “You know, why don’t I just do a little teaser?” It was



another numbered list and I was just as floored with how many people – like doubled our previous record. So ...

Pat Flynn: That's cool. That's so cool. I want to go back to really quick your dinner meal plans that you created.

Lisa Leake: They're not just dinner

Pat Flynn: Sorry.

Lisa Leake: They're breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack.

Pat Flynn: Oh, OK. Sorry. I think I wrote down dollar, was it 5 Dollar mama ...

Lisa Leake: [5 Dollar Dinners mama](#).

Pat Flynn: Oh OK, that's where I got – sorry, my notes were all screwed up here.

Lisa Leake: That's OK. Her name is Erin Chase and she is the one who gave me that advice.

Pat Flynn: Erin Chase, I'll make sure to link to her on the show notes. And the reason I wanted to talk about that because I think the strategy of just sharing exact – because you had mentioned, you were writing out the meal plans and everything that people need to buy and everything people need to get just – it makes it really easy for them almost to the point, they don't have to think.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. And I even put how much each item cost and like the total. I mean it was a lot of work for me. And I put it out for there for free.

Pat Flynn: See, that's cool. I mean I think a lot of us in other industries can take this idea of sharing the recipes for things and just giving people exactly what they want. And that is a great way to create a lead in or a lead magnet for your email list. It's a great thing to just give away to your audience just to give a little bit more value and make a deeper connection in a quick easy way. So I think even though you guys were talking about food, everybody else out there who's not in the food space can still take those same strategies and create a recipe for success or recipe for whatever it is that your goals are for your audience and share that.



And I have sort of – I mean I try to do that in what I do and I think everybody can benefit from thinking about the giveaways and the things that they have for the audience, sort of like recipes and trying to make it as easy as possible to follow.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. I think it's the key to retaining people. So like when we had the big burst of traffic from the Yahoo homepage, I was able to bump up my traffic on a regular basis because I retain people through that [fan gate](#) on my Facebook page. I've talked to other bloggers who have been in national media and then the traffic just goes right back where it started because they didn't retain. That that's like the hardest part is to get them to stick around.

Pat Flynn: Right. And OK, let's say for somebody out there listening and they have a blog and they're really passionate about it, and they might only have a couple of thousand visitors a month. They're not quite – nearly quite to your level yet and have a small following on Facebook, a few hundred people. What would you suggest to those people to expand and grow and maybe the 20% that they would need to do to get 80% results? Maybe I'll start with Jason.

Jason Leake: OK. Well, I would really focus on our email list right now. I actually got some advice from one of your podcasts about putting an email sign up form like at the end of the blog post and before the comments. And for us, that is by far the highest converting spot. And we have actually like a 3D picture of the meal plan. People like to think of something as tangible. And so, our email list right now is I think about 155,000. We get about 10,000 a month. We use like a hello bar at the top.

But at any rate, because of what's going on with social media, you really don't want to build your house on rented land, so to speak. And really focus on connecting with your people, with your audience and getting feedback. So like with Pro Blog School, I started that November. I had very low traffic. But I have a suggestion box which has a form. And so, I'm asking people, "Who else are you following? What's your biggest problem right now? What products can I make that would really help you?"

And I remember when we were hiking in Cinque Terre last summer when we had the idea to come up with Pro Blog School, I was thinking, "Oh, it will take six months to make this really awesome elaborate course." Lisa was like, "No, dude. You start your site ..."

Lisa Leake: I don't think I said dude.



Pat Flynn: You guys are in California. No, you're on the other side of the country.

Jason Leake: Yeah. She said, "No, Jason. You need to start a website and just bare bones." And so I literally had the sample theme from Genesis, bare bones, and just started interacting with people. And I really discovered something new about the audience. I thought I was going to be going after people more like at the intermediate level that needed to learn how to monetize. But there are a lot of beginners out there that even need help just setting up their site, and those would be future consumers of that content. So I totally changed my strategy as a result.

So start simple. Listen to your readers.

Pat Flynn: Awesome. Thank you for that, Jason. Lisa, how about you? What advice would you give to somebody who has a site and it may not be going the way they want to right now?

Lisa Leake: Well, I mean I think it's kind of hard to answer that to be honest because I think your topic is something that you need to be really passionate about. I mean I think my site has grown tremendously because I'm so passionate about it and I have so much to share. I mean I'm never short – I never have like writer's block. So I think it's part just like being – blogging about the right topic but also I think some luck plays into it because I also happen to become passionate about a topic that's like really popular right now and it's just growing tremendously. So even like Wal-Mart is starting to carry more organic foods. I mean this is like going mainstream. So I think it just – you hope that you have that formula that works together nicely.

But I do agree with Jason about listening to your readers. I learn from my readers all the time and that helps me come up with ideas of what to write about. I do also sometimes just even take content I maybe already shared and I package it up in a different way and just always like soaking up information and getting ideas of what to write about and how to present it.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, that's fantastic. Thank you so much for that, both of you. Now, I want to ask you both sort of like what has been the biggest struggle with that you have going on? Things are going really well but I know – I mean I'm doing really well too but there are things that I still struggle with as well. What are some of the things that you guys struggle with in business and what are you doing to work through those struggles?



Lisa Leake: Well, first thing on the top of my mind right now is Facebook just because it was like – it was going amazingly well as far as my reach. So I had 1.3 million fans and it has been in that range for some time and I used to easily be able to reach like 500,000, 700,000 people, no problem. And then it's like if you look at the insight's graph on my Facebook page, it literally drops off like a cliff on January 13th. I don't know why. And so it has been frustrating, almost like not as fun that piece of it which I always thought was very fun because it's like I put something out there and then I see 50 or 100,000 people see it and it's frustrating. And I would compare like a very similar post from a few months prior and ten times as many people would see it.

So that reach, the change in reach has been frustrating for me. I mean we're still totally fine and we're going to have to come up with a new model for our sponsors that doesn't just rely on a Facebook shout-out and we're going to roll with the punches. But that has been out of my control and probably the first aspect of all this that has really been frustrating for me.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, I mean – sorry I cut you off, Jason. I mean for everybody out there listening, 50 to 100,000 sounds like a lot but when you have 1.3 million.

Lisa Leake: I know. And I said that to my girlfriend, "I'm only reaching 50,000 people." She was like, "Wait. Is that good or bad?"

Pat Flynn: Well, I'm seeing those same statistics and I saw the same drop. I have 60,000 plus followers on Facebook and I'm only reaching between 8 and 12 depending on the viralness of the particular post that I write. Now, I have been doing things like including images and things like that which do get spread a little bit further but it's nowhere near where it was. It's still working really well for me but it is definitely a struggle. And I think Jason, I appreciate what you said, "You don't want to build on somebody else's land." And that's why the email list is incredibly important and I have to second that for sure.

Jason Leake: Yeah. And to put it in perspective, so last year, we averaged three and a half million page views a month. January is our biggest time and also Facebook was working so to speak for the first half of that month. And we had over five million page views that month. Now, we're down to about 3.7. So our actual traffic has dropped to about 25% as a result and all that traffic is monetized through the things I've done on the page. So it totally hits our bottom line.



But rather than be dejected about it, we have to look at it as, "Hey, that was a great opportunity." I mean we started to diversify early on because we knew like something like this could happen but at the same time we weren't going to turn our back on the opportunity while it was fun and while it was really providing a lot of reach.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. I just hate how it kind of took the fun of things for a little while. But I did have two posts yesterday on Facebook that each reached over 800,000. So I guess depending on what you're writing about, it can still give you that light of hope that it's good.

Jason Leake: Really what's going on is it's almost like – it's really polar. So if you hit a certain threshold in a certain amount of time, it's like then they open the gates and it can go. But if you don't hit that very quickly then it kind of fizzles.

So anyway – but I would like to respond with a couple of challenges on the operation side.

Pat Flynn: Please.

Jason Leake: We've built so fast. And I'm trying to remember the podcast number. It was – oh yeah, it was 103, stop being a superhero. I love that. I just listened to that in the car. And that's really is being able to delegate and automate as much as possible and not to confuse being busy for being productive. I mean in addition to income, what I really crave is freedom, freedom to work on the things like writing blog posts or writing an e-book or something or interacting with customers, doing whatever, maybe starting a podcast, who knows? Something fun and not the operation side of things.

So really ramping up your team as quickly as possible, and we have seven part-time people, is super important and it's a challenge because you're dealing with people.

Pat Flynn: Right. Do you ever think that you would have a team of seven people working for you when you first started this, Lisa?

Lisa Leake: Never in a million years.

Pat Flynn: And how is that – like I don't know if you've hired them all at once or just over time but how is that feeling now?



Lisa Leake: It's awesome because I mean we are so lucky. At least the people that I've hired – well, not all of them. Jason had a little struggle with the assistant for him for a little while. But now, he actually hired one of my friends so I can say that all the people in our team are really amazing. I mean they're a joy to work with. I try to be like flexible and reasonable in working with them and I also am not one of those who breathe down their neck.

I feel like they all have – we have somebody who answers comments on the blog. I mean that's a whole job. Someone who answers Facebook comments and also does our Pinterest page and then the sales manager that Jason mentioned and a couple of others. And I think they're all just – they're a joy to work with. So that's really – we're very fortunate for that.

Pat Flynn: That's cool. How did you find these people that you've hired?

Lisa Leake: All friends of friends. And again, Jason, he tried to just go out and hire somebody through like an application process. He went through two different people for an assistant job and it just did not work out. So I think it's nice just – I don't ever want to hire like a really good friend because I don't want to damage a relationship. But like friends of friends is a great place to start.

Pat Flynn: Yeah, that's great. That's great advice. Thank you for that. And a couple more questions. Now you had mentioned earlier, Lisa, that this is a trending topic and that has obviously helped with the growth of your site. But that also probably means there are a lot of other sites out there talking about the same stuff. And I know there are because I follow a lot of them. And so how do you and what do both of you guys do and what do you strategize about to stand out from everybody else out there talking about the same thing? What are some of the things that make you guys unique and why you feel your audience is with you instead of some other people?

Lisa Leake: Well, I do feel like I maybe started a little sooner than some of these other sites. But I agree, sometimes I look out there and I say, "God! There are so many sites talking about real food, moms trying to feed their family right." I mean it's not really a conscious strategy. I'm just myself. I mean that's the easiest thing I can be and from the get-go, I wanted to talk to my old self because I was clueless about the food we were eating and I didn't realize that they were not good for us and that they were highly processed. So I'm always trying – and then like once I had the information, I thought, "Well, this has to change." So I'm always trying to talk to my old self and



again, it's nothing conscious. I'm just myself and I don't know. I guess it just works. I'm sorry I don't have a some more specific advice on that.

Pat Flynn: No, that's great advice. And I think a lot of people try to be somebody else when they should probably use what they have that nobody else has which is their own experience themselves.

Lisa Leake: Yeah, that's the easiest thing to do.

Jason Leake: Yeah. It's really important to identify who your reader is and speak to them in a language they can understand and relate to them. So like with my blog, I'm very sophisticated in some of the work I do but I really have to think back to when I was first starting out and remember that frustration and how ignorant I was, how I just had no idea where to start. And so, it takes a lot longer for me to write post because I go the extra mile. I mean I was up until 1:30 last night working on a post because you have to hold their hand and really give them what they need and then they'll totally identify with it. And if you can give them wins, it should be that success to you.

Lisa Leake: I'll also just add really quickly. I am also very realistic. I don't know it all by any stretch of the imagination and I'm very upfront about that and I do know some people who give me feedback that that's what they like about my site is they feel like I'm just like them. I'm just a regular mom just like them. People say that a lot.

Jason Leake: And one last thing. I think authenticity is huge. I mean every decision we make, we think about are we being authentic? Is this who we really are? Are we keeping our reader's best interest in mind? And like with my site, Pro Blog School, I'm not a site writing about making money online. It's not like a pyramid scheme. I'm using a real life example and giving people behind the scenes information on how we're able to succeed.

Pat Flynn: Right. And that's absolutely important. And as everybody out there knows, that's what's helped me grow as a blogger especially in this very crowded and almost very negative sort of space. I've been able to sort of come out as the authentic person because I am just being myself and I always keep my readers at the top of every decision that I make. And so, I really, really appreciate you guys saying that.

Now to finish up, let's talk about this book deal because that sounds really cool and I know – I'm curious to hear the story of how this book deal happened and how the process has been. We've had a number of people on the show before who have gone



through the process of writing a book both self-published, traditionally-published. Sounds like you're going traditional. Can you talk about how this came about and your decision to go traditional if that is the case and how it has been?

Lisa Leake: Yes. From the get-go, I just wanted it to be like in the bookstore if I was going to do this. I never – I was always like if I write a book. This was not like a childhood dream of mine back to how I didn't do very well in English. But it just – it felt like the next step with where the blog was headed. And so – and I am kind of – can be ambitious at times so I really just had that in mind. And so, I have a friend of a friend who published a book with HarperCollins and she put me in touch with her literary agent. And the first time I talked to the literary agent, I thought I was feeling all – I don't know if you can cuss on here. No. OK.

I was feeling ...

Pat Flynn: Thank you.

Lisa Leake: I was feeling very proud of my numbers at the time and so, I had about a hundred thousand page views and I think I had like a couple of thousand Facebook fans. And so, I approached this agent and she basically just handed it right back to me and said, "You know, you need hundreds of thousands of page views and tens of thousands of Facebook fans before any big publisher is going to consider you."

Pat Flynn: Wow!

Lisa Leake: So I just really took that and ran with it. And that's actually the point when I developed the meal plans and really started to focus on how to like get the word out there. As much as my site was not about like building the traffic, that's kind of fun. So that's when I really put my mind to it. And so, I went back to her several months later and was like, "Hey, check me out now." And so, I had exceeded what she said I would need and then I went through the long process of writing the book proposal. It was like 60 pages long.

Pat Flynn: Wow!

Lisa Leake: And I had three sample chapters and even though I had this whole blog to share, they still wanted that. And then she went out and basically put my proposal out there to maybe like a dozen or more publishers. I can't remember the exact number. And it's like you never know what's going to happen if you're going to hear right away



or if there's going to be interest or not. And I had no idea what to expect. But within like 24 hours, it just started getting interest and it was so exciting. I could hardly contain myself. So I started to hear back and it ended up going to auctions. So that was pretty exciting.

And then HarperCollins actually put in a preempt which is an offer to kind of like take it off the table so it won't go to auction. And so, that by far exceeded my expectations. And then I started the really long difficult process of actually writing the book which was honestly the hardest I've ever worked in my whole life. Forget college exams or any of that. It was the – because it was like an extension of me and I didn't want it just to be this book. I want it to be awesome and everything people would want. And it was just very hard.

Pat Flynn: I've heard that several times from authors. Some people said that on the show. It is one of the hardest things to do.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. I wonder if I'll do it again. Never say never.

Pat Flynn: And how long did it take you to finish and have that final version?

Lisa Leake: Well – so the manuscript – I guess I signed like in July of 2012 I think. And then the manuscript was due March 1, 2013. And then that was kind of an interesting process because then I didn't really hear very much for quite a while and my book was supposed to come out in January and I was like busting my butt to turn it in on time because I really wanted that peak time, January of this year for it to come out. And then all of a sudden by the fall, I'm like, "OK, we haven't started editing yet. Is this really happening?"

So long story short, it's not. And I got delayed and I guess that happens sometimes and I'm just again, just trying to roll with it. They actually wanted to delay it to May but that's a horrible time in my opinion for my book to come out because that's when all the moms – like that's the most of my audience are the moms.

Pat Flynn: That's when schools are about to end.

Lisa Leake: Yeah. The schools are going to be out. Everybody – people are kind of – they're going on summer vacation and we see – I have a couple of years now under my belt of seeing the traffic. It definitely does not go up in May but it really does in August for back to school. So I said, "If we're going to wait, I would much rather just like wait



a couple more months and have it come out at a much better time of year.” So it has been a very long process.

Pat Flynn: That’s crazy. It makes you wonder how – like if there’s time-sensitive stuff and current events and you’re trying to write a book about that. Like would it be old by the time?

Lisa Leake: Well, yeah. In the editing process, I had to change things like for example, my daughter is no longer seven, she’s nine. It’s like crazy.

Pat Flynn: That’s so interesting. Wow! Thank you for being honest and sharing all that. And we obviously wish you all both the best of luck when it comes out. And please let me know when it does so I can take a look and share it and put a link in the show notes here.

Lisa Leake: Thank you. Actually, you can put a link now. It’s available for preorder now.

Pat Flynn: Oh, where at? It’s on 100DaysofRealFood.com?

Lisa Leake: Well, just go to Amazon and you can type in 100 Days of Real Food and it’s already available for preorder. So you can put a link now if you really want. That would be awesome.

Pat Flynn: OK. I will do that. Awesome. Thank you guys so much. If you want to leave just based off of your experience here in just creating 100 Days of Real Food, one final tip for everybody out there from both of you, we’ll start with Jason and then finish up with Lisa just to help and give some encouragement to people out there listening. Just any final words of wisdom, Jason?

Jason Leake: Yeah. I would say, don’t be afraid to experiment. I mean just go out there and do. There’s such a fast feedback loop with the internet business. It’s truly amazing. So just try something out. See the results and drop stuff that’s not working and then focus on the things that are or that make you happy.

Pat Flynn: I love that. That’s how I run my business and I definitely think that’s how everybody should run their business for sure. Thank you. Lisa?



Lisa Leake: I would say, don't – no matter where your journey takes you, don't lose sight of like why you started your website in the first place because I started mine to help people. For us to cut out processed food was so challenging. I literally lost sleep over it. And so, I worked so hard to figure it out. I wanted to share on my blog everything I learned to make it easier for other people and I try never to lose sight of that no matter what the numbers say or what Facebook does. But I think that's really important to remember kind of where you came from.

Pat Flynn: Awesome. Thank you both so much for your time today. And if people want to go or visit your website, that's 100DaysofRealFood.com. Jason's blogging site is at ProBlogSchool.com. And where can people find you on social media?

Lisa Leake: Well, 100DaysofRealFood.com/Facebook. I'm always there.

Pat Flynn: All right.

Jason Leake: Yeah, I'm on Facebook too.

Lisa Leake: Oh, sorry. It's Facebook.com/100DaysofRealFood. I said it backwards.

Pat Flynn: It's OK. It could be a redirect actually.

Lisa Leake: Yeah, I don't actually have that link.

Jason Leake: But we're both really pushing the email list so just go to the homepage and subscribe if you want to get updates. And if I may throw in one plug, Pat.

Pat Flynn: Please.

Jason Leake: I'm working on an Income Calculator. I'm super excited about because I think it's going to help people quite a bit. So I'm not sure when this podcast will be published but if you go to ProBlogSchool.com/Income, you'll see it or see that it's coming soon.

Pat Flynn: An Income Calculator, what is that?

Jason Leake: Well, it will be able to answer some basic questions about your blog like your traffic, your email subscribers and then based on where you are, it will reveal different options to monetize your blog and you can switch, turn things on and off and



then it will show you and also calculate expenses, your income per thousand page views per month and per year.

Lisa Leake: Potential income.

Jason Leake: Right.

Pat Flynn: OK. So it's not like a push of a button and all of a sudden, they start making that money.

Jason Leake: No. But I think it will be insanely useful for people. There are a lot of people that are delusional. They have no idea.

Pat Flynn: Oh, for sure.

Jason Leake: They think, "Oh, if I just start a blog, I'm going to be rolling." And then likewise, other people, they would like to get an estimate to help them make business decisions. So I think it will be a lot of fun for people to use.

Pat Flynn: Awesome. Thank you for that, Jason. Thank you, Lisa. Thank you. Again, 100DaysofRealFood.com, go check it out. And I'll talk to you guys soon.

Lisa Leake: Right. Thank you so much.

Jason Leake: Thanks a lot, Pat.

Pat Flynn: Thank you.

All right. I hope you enjoyed that interview with Lisa and Jason Leake from 100DaysofRealFood.com. If both of you are listening to this, thank you so much for the inspiration and all the education. And congratulations to you on all of your success and I'm sure there's going to be much more in the future.

For those of you listening, if you enjoyed this episode, please head on over to iTunes. Look for the show, Smart Passive Income, and please leave a review for the show. It helps with rankings. It helps keep me motivated to keep going. And just thank you. Thank you so much for that.



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Now one more time, that link is 99Designs.com/SPI. Thank you to the folks at 99Designs for being awesome and sponsoring the show.

The last thing I want to say is this. You are awesome. Thank you so much for listening to the show. Thank you so much for listening until the end. You are amazing. Hit me up on Twitter. Let me know that you like this episode @PatFlynn. And also, I'll see you on the Facebook page, Facebook.com/SmartPassiveIncome. Thanks so much. Love you guys so much and I'll see you in the next episode of Smart Passive Income Podcast. Peace.

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