



## SPI Podcast Session #142 –

### How Paying Attention Paid Off for Joseph Michael, the Scrivener Coach

Show notes: [www.smartpassiveincome.com/session142](http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session142)

This is the smart passive income podcast with Pat Flynn, session #142. Happy New Year!

#### **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 his dad can finish a crossword puzzle like a champion, Pat Flynn.

**Pat Flynn:** What is up, everybody? What's up and welcome to 2015. It's the first episode of the year and I couldn't be more excited because we have a great episode today. To start off, I just want to get right into the content because we have a great interview today with Joseph Michael from [JosephMichael.net](http://JosephMichael.net) and also [learnscrivenerfast.com](http://learnscrivenerfast.com). If you don't know what Scrivener is, it's one of the most amazing tools out there that primarily people use to write books.

I've used Scrivener to help write my book [Let Go](#) and I'm using it currently to manage, organize and write my next upcoming book, again that's a huge goal of mine for this year is to complete a book and eventually get it into the New York Times best seller list but more on that later.

In this episode, I want to talk about how he's taken his experience with this tool and turned it into a business that is doing really, really well for him, simply by just paying attention. I think that's a lot of what people struggle with because we kind of go through life and there might be business opportunities just going right by us but you know what? Joseph paid attention, he made things happen and amazing things have happened as a result of that.



We have a lot of great content here talking about his whole process and some of the mistakes he's made. We're going to start off the year right so let's just dive right into this episode. Again this is Joseph Michael from [learnscribenerfast.com](http://learnscribenerfast.com).

**Pat Flynn:** What's up everybody? I'm so happy to welcome Joseph Michael from Learn Scrivener Fast and also JosephMichael.net to the show. Joseph, what's up? Welcome to the show.

**Joseph Michael:** Hey Pat, thanks so much for having me, I am super stoked to be here.

**Pat Flynn:** Now, right before this call actually, you had told me something interesting about your name, which I think a lot of people can relate to. Can you talk about that really quick?

**Joseph Michael:** I have a confession to make before we get started. Joseph Michael is not actually my real name. I wanted to bring this up because I think a lot of people might be able to relate with this and we'll talk about my story as we get going but a couple of years ago before I started this whole online business, I had a day job and I was actually afraid that they were not going to like what I was doing on the side or they were going to find out and they were going to ask me to not be doing anything on the side. But it was this passion I had so I went by the name Joseph Michael.

Joseph is my first name and Michael is my middle name but my full name is actually Joseph Michael Nicoletti. It's a good Irish name, right?

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah I love it. I'm Pat Flynn. The only thing I need is an 'O' for a middle name, I'd be Pat O'Flynn.

**Joseph Michael:** Nice! But I don't say that to sound like a celebrity or it makes a difference but I think that it might be able to relate with some people. There were a few reasons why I did that in the beginning because I remember that fear of being found out and shut down. Obviously I wasn't making a dime then, I couldn't be fired over it.

I also didn't want my real name to be attached to it failing. I tried a lot of things before and it was out of fear. We all start with that fear of failure and I thought if I don't even



use my real full name then nobody will even ever see that I tried something and it failed.

But I've come a long way now and now I'm proud of what I accomplished and I'm making that switch over to using my full name and being completely transparent.

From now on, online my name will be my full name. I just wanted to officially announce that to you and your readers first.

**Pat Flynn:** Thank you for sharing that. Now you're proud of what you've done and you've done a lot. Tell us exactly what it is that you do and then rewind for us a little bit and tell us how you got there.

**Joseph Michael:** Sure. I created an online course, it's called Learn Scrivener Fast, like you mentioned. Basically I teach people how to accelerate their writing career in less than a week using Scrivener.

It came out of a funny story, I started an efficiency blog in the very beginning called [Efficient Life Skills](#). It was mainly like I wanted to get in the game. It's an honor to be talking to you Pat, specifically because I've done a lot of interviews now and I always bring this up - I got my start through you. It was out of frustration of the day job that I was looking for something to make extra money, to make ends meet. My family and I were trying to do the Dave Ramsay plan, trying to get out of debt, save up for a house, trying for another child. I was like "I just need an extra \$300 a month." That for me at the time would have been life changing.

I was trying to get a pizza delivery job. A lot of Dave Ramsay listeners will hear that pizza delivery on the side can change everything. I kept getting turned down by pizza delivery places because I didn't have experience. It was crazy. I remember being so frustrated after driving home from my third or fourth interview. I couldn't nail the job. I was like "What is going on?"

I was driving home, fighting the traffic and it was like one of those scenes out of a movie where you see the guy praying to God on his way home - what do I do? I'm trying here.

It was literally one of those light bulb moments where I thought "Why don't you Google how to make money online?"



My first thought was "No way, that's shady stuff; it's scammy" - I was used to the 1990's stuff, I thought no one was doing anything legit online.

But I loved tech, I loved computers, I had a background in it. I ended up searching something about how to make money online, passive income, those kinds of things and sure enough, your site come up, I ended up seeing one of your income reports and I was like "Wait a minute, this guy must be doing something totally scammy." I was looking all over your site for a product, I thought "What are you selling? You're just helping people? This is crazy." I was sold from that day. I devoured your site, listened to every podcast you've ever put out there. I became addicted to all information on online business I could find.

I had no idea what I was doing still. I just wanted to create some kind of website to start learning. Efficient Life Skills was what I started with because I knew a lot of productivity stuff growing up, I was the guy who was always listening to Zig Ziglar and Tony Robbins. I was the weird teenager. Those were the things I was listening to while cutting the grass, things like that.

I thought I'd start a blog about that. It's what I knew.

I was learning about SEO and all those things. I remember eBooks were the thing. Everybody was making eBooks so I thought I'd make an eBook. It's funny because I spent months on this eBook, I didn't even know if my readers wanted it, which is a big lesson here. I created the most beautiful looking eBook that nobody saw.

Nobody wanted it. I spent months of my time creating it. I was like "What is going on here?"

I say that it was my first lesson in online business and creating products. You have to survey your audience. You have to build what they want, not what you think they want. That's what led me down this experiment of finding a product and a pain and more specifically I was looking for a problem that I could solve.

Long story short, I ended up writing a post on that site just for fun really. I was teaching my daughter how to tie her shoes. I think she was 6 years old at the time. Pat, you've probably been through this. Teaching a kid to tie their shoes is incredibly hard, is it not?

**Pat Flynn:** That's why we have Velcro shoes in this household.



**Joseph Michael:** Yeah. You realize how hard it is to teach this. We forget, we're just so used to it right?

**Pat Flynn:** The rabbit ears around the loop or the snake through the... Whatever.

**Joseph Michael:** I started sitting down with my daughter and going through these steps and I was like "This is impossible, how did I ever learn this?" So I ended up doing some research on these different methods. I found this magic fingers technique online. I tried it with my daughter and she literally tied her shoes in 5 minutes from teaching this.

**Pat Flynn:** I want that resource by the way.

**Joseph Michael:** I wrote a post called "How to teach your child how to tie their shoes in 5 minutes." If anything, Grandma and Grandpa will think this is cute. I did a little video of her tying her shoes, walked through the steps. I was really looking for content then and I was like "This could be helpful, right? Maybe a few parents struggle with this."

The thing took off and went viral. Today if you go on that page, it's got half a million shares. Crazy, right? It still continues every single school year, there's a huge spike in traffic because people are looking for how to teach their kids to tie shoes before they go to school.

It's like life changing stuff. Some people in the comments are like "You've changed my kids' life, they're 9 years old and we've never been able to teach them and now they've gone with confidence into their class" and it was like wow, it's so cool.

**Pat Flynn:** I found [the post](#), it was published August 25th 2012.

**Joseph Michael:** That was my first traction post. I'd spent the time to research why it did so well. What I found was it solved a very specific problem for people. Unlike my eBook, it didn't solve any problem, it was like a time management eBook. I was trying to sell it for \$39 and people can just find that information online or whatever. But this was a very specific problem that people could relate to. That's what I started looking for in terms of product creation.



I was just doing my research, writing posts because I knew this probably wasn't going to be my end game but there's a big lesson to be learned in just doing something, just to take action. Through the action is where you learn stuff. I was writing 3 blog posts a week then and I had heard from you that you were using Scrivener for [Let Go](#).

**Pat Flynn:** For those of you out there who don't know what that is, it's a tool to help authors create their books. It organizes things for you and I was using that through a recommendation from - I don't even remember. It's a hard tool to get used to. There's a tutorial that takes you through how to use the tool but once you learn how to use it, it's fantastic. It made writing *Let Go* so much easier.

**Joseph Michael:** Awesome. I'm so glad you said that because that's exactly what I found too. I'd heard that you were using it and so I was like "Pat's using it, so I'm going to check it out" because I'm a geek that way with new tools and apps and all that. I downloaded it and I found the same thing, like this is kind of hard.

I'm the kind of guy who likes to play around and learn things for fun but this one was difficult. I did the online tutorial, which took hours to get through. I did it in pieces. I did end up learning it and you're right, it is life changing in terms of how much you can organize and move your content around. It's crazy. I was using it to write all my blog posts. I started another blog then for other things. I was like the "take a shower and you get a new idea and register a domain name guy too."

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, and then you get back in the shower because you weren't finished yet.

**Joseph Michael:** Because you have to do it because somebody else could get it!

**Pat Flynn:** Exactly.

**Joseph Michael:** I was using it to write all my blog posts and eBooks that nobody was reading. I loved the tool. It's like when you have a new car and then all of a sudden you see that model car everywhere.

Every post written about Scrivener caught my eye. I was like "Yeah, I love this thing too." It was a post that Michael Hyatt did. You might remember this one where he wrote [5 reasons why he switched to Scrivener](#) for all of his writing. I was like "Sweet, Michael Hyatt's using Scrivener, I feel really validated now." He mentioned about using it for blog posts and things like that.



I remember sitting in a coffee shop and scrolling down through the comments. There were hundreds of comments of people saying the same thing that you and I just said like "I love Scrivener too but that learning curve was tough" and other people had said "I gave up on Scrivener, I tried it but I couldn't wrap my head around it," the same thing over and over again. I was like "Man, people really struggle with this." There's a few YouTube tutorials on it, some of them are OK, nothing really organized.

I remember somewhere in the post they were talking about, if there was a course on this, he would buy it today. People were like "Yeah, there really isn't. There's Scrivener for Dummies and things like that"...

I was like "Wait a minute, there's really no course for this?" I checked Lynda.com, nothing on there. I was like "Wow, OK", so I was like "Here's a pain, I'm pretty passionate about the software already. I use it. I like it and I had a background in training" so I felt like I could teach pretty well.

It was like this second light bulb moment. I was like "Hey, I wonder if I could create that course, maybe in a couple of weekends." I was really naive then. It took 8 months to create something that was ready to put out to the market.

I started getting feedback from users. I first started on Twitter, finding people who were talking about Scrivener. There's a lot of people actually. I was blown away by the amount of people talking about it.

People were really passionate about spreading the Twitter gospel. People are obsessed with this software. People tweet things, one of my favorites is this one person who tweeted like "I love Scrivener so much, I want to have it's adorable, organized babies." Wow, OK!

My initial thought was what if people could in the same sentence talk about Scrivener and then also recommend a resource for people to learn it? Because that's the second most talked about thing, that learning curve.

That's in a nutshell how I started making Learn Scrivener Fast.

**Pat Flynn:** When was it launched?

**Joseph Michael:** It was launched just this January 2014.



**Pat Flynn:** How has it been going?

**Joseph Michael:** It's been going amazing. I was so afraid to charge any money for it at first, I was just giving it away. What I did was put up a [Gumroad](#) page in the beginning and I did a free coupon code, it was like \$39 then for a free coupon code for 100% off. I would get in these conversations on Twitter with anybody who was mentioning it. I was like "Hey, I'm looking for feedback on this new Scrivener course that I'm developing, here's a free coupon code."

They would go in and give me feedback like "This is amazing, you should definitely charge double for this, what you're going to charge." People were saying "Could you add this, could you add that?"

Today it's completely quadrupled my day job income. I've been working from home, doing conferences. It's crazy. People are flooding my inbox everyday with like "Thank you for making this, you literally got me to finish my work in progress. I've gone on to publish..."

It's crazy to think it all started with just paying attention. I tell people all the time "Read the comments on blog posts." That's where a lot of the meat is. You're going to find a lot of gold there with people's real language, what they're saying. Look for specific problems that you can solve.

**Pat Flynn:** That's amazing. This is so cool. Now you've been featured on sites like Jeff Goins and Michael Hyatt and all these other people who have author platforms and that is lining up perfectly for what you have to offer. How awesome is that.

**Joseph Michael:** Absolutely. My original idea was "I'm going to build this thing and then I'm going to bring it to Michael Hyatt who said that he wanted a course for it." Interacting on Twitter, there was a moment where Michael actually asked a question and I was able to answer it.

A big lesson for people on Twitter is it's that constant conversation and adding value for people. You say that all the time and I think that's where I first learned it. Thank you by the way because it takes patience. It's not like you just jump on Twitter or Facebook and just talk about your product. It's adding value and then when someone asks you a question, now you have this open door.





I literally built the whole business on Twitter just from interacting with people, being helpful, sharing links and things like that. There came a point where I finally got to help Michael Hyatt with something and he was able to go through the course and he tweeted about the course that it was really well done.

That just immediately opened up a whole new set of opportunities. I had people emailing me all of a sudden, sales shot through the roof. I really got a taste for how much influence and trust matters online. It was my idea to partner up with people who already had the audience that I wanted and doing these joint ventures.

I've done a lot of webinars lately, partnering with people who have this exact audience of people that I can help. It's extremely shot me to the front of the line. It reminds me of those amusement park front of the line passes.

**Pat Flynn:** Fast Pass.

**Joseph Michael:** If you want to get to the front of the line, I know no quicker way than:

- 1) Creating a product that people need and love. That's number 1. It has to be a good thing.
- 2) Partnering with people who already have that target audience.

It's like a win-win-win. It was totally like a dream come true for me to see what you've always talked about, help enough people to get what they want and you'll get what you want in the end.

**Pat Flynn:** I think it's really cool, it's a prime example of somebody creating a product with the community's needs in mind. That word 'community' is important because as you said, a lot of people were already talking about his in a cult-like fashion and here you are, able to provide a solution.

Do you find that it was all you needed to create this particular product for this particular set of customers or community members who then shared it for you because it was so great? Or were there any sort of things you did in the beginning to help market it?

**Joseph Michael:** That was kind of like phase 2. Phase 1 was just word of mouth. It was helping a lot. I remember asking a lot of people who were further along than me,



like Brett Kelly with his Evernote Essentials. I got to talk with him because his was kind of a similar model with creating a product around another product already. Affiliates was a big deal. A lot of people recommend them and a lot of people are asking me for that too like "Do you have an affiliate program because I would love to recommend this?" and I was like "OK, well that's easy" so I ended up getting an affiliate program and then people were sharing it naturally.

Then I considered this last year as I stopped building. I had the potential to just keep tweaking things to death. It's that perfectionism type thing. That was a lesson I learned early on too was if you can just think of everything, you can go back later and upgrade it.

When I was making the tutorial videos for the course in the beginning, I went through the same thing everybody else does, you hate hearing your voice, you hate watching yourself on camera, all those things. It was like "Just get through it, put this out there, I can always go back and fix this later".

I'm so glad I did that because I would have still been working on those and they would have never gotten out there. Today I've never gone back and changed some of those early videos as much as they pain me. People comment constantly, like "I love the quality of your videos and your audio, that really matters". We are our worst critic. Just get it out there. You have to ship it.

I considered this last year, no more tweaking, no more adding. I was just going to promote. I was learning a lot about how to do that. Twitter is my first love as far as where my people were. Then more recently, the webinars and I've been experimenting with some Facebook ads, which have worked really well, but nothing has really worked as good as webinars especially for a teaching product. We can join up with - for instance I did a webinar with Joanna Penn lately. She has a really big self-publishing audience and it's just like triple value everywhere.

I get on a webinar and we have 900 people on there who are all interested in learning Scrivener because it's such a big pain and I give them 45 minutes of solid stuff they can use right away. It's a quick "Hey by the way, if you want more, here's this really deep hand holding course for you."

Then of course there's a whole new level of people that are inside and will expose you to affiliate programs and it's really grown organically that way.



**Pat Flynn:** How many people have gone through the course so far? If you don't mind me asking?

**Joseph Michael:** We just hit over 3000 people.

**Pat Flynn:** That's so cool.

**Joseph Michael:** Yeah, it's really awesome.

I think it was last month we were able to get the product on App Sumo, which was really cool. We got 1000 new customers from that.

It's been fun. It's gotten easier now. In the beginning it was really hard to get your name out there. As you build the credibility and you do more partnerships with influencers, all of a sudden it becomes rather easy.

I got to the point where I was juggling the day job and this on the side. I couldn't do the webinars, I was racing home on my lunch break to try to do a webinar really quick and then fly back to work.

It was scary though because all I've ever known is the day job and that security.

**Pat Flynn:** And you're not working there anymore?

**Joseph Michael:** I'm not. I quit my day job just 2 months ago.

**Pat Flynn:** Congratulations.

**Joseph Michael:** Thank you. It was like a dream come true.

**Pat Flynn:** I want you to hear this, everybody. Joseph quit his day job, he's built this successful product but you've just mentioned that you have 3000 customers. In the grand scheme of things that's actually not that very many people in this entire world, but you are providing a product that is helping to provide value and you're getting paid for it. You don't have to build something that changes the entire world. It would be awesome if you could, but you are changing the world of the author who is struggling on Scrivener and that makes a difference and it can help do what exactly you're doing now. You've quit your job, you're able to spend more time at home with the family and you're making good money.



**Joseph Michael:** Yeah, absolutely. It's crazy. There's this quote from Lewis Schiff from that Business Brilliant book, I just read it. He did a survey of what most wealthy people say compared to middle class. The difference is the wealthy take an ordinary idea and they execute on it exceptionally well. Whereas the middle class have this mindset of where they think they have to have this brilliant life-changing idea and they are waiting for that to fall out of the sky and hit them, and then they'll make it.

Really, it's just these ordinary ideas. There was a need, there was a pain. It's the execution of it that really matters. Those 8 months of trying to find the time to build the course, to make it high quality all in your spare time, that was the hard part.

It's amazing because the passive income thing really is real. I was skeptical for a long time. I was like "Could this really work?" and all of a sudden you see, you put the time in, you build something and then - it's funny, my wife and I joke about we'll be at lunch and then we'll come out, I'll check my email and it's like "Oh, there's lunch for the next week just paid for while we were having lunch." It's crazy.

It's finding those small margins where you can fit stuff in and create stuff.

I tell people all the time because they always say "I don't have time, I have a day job and a family" and I'm like "I had all those things, a full time day job, a wife and kids, zero time but I had a lunch break and I knew I could use that hour to do something." I would literally go in my car during lunch breaks, bring my laptop with a cheap little blue snowflake microphone and I would bring some pillows if I needed to add some sound buffering and I would sit there and record tutorial videos one at a time.

You can find the time if you're serious with yourself.

**Pat Flynn:** Back when I first started out, lunch hour for me was huge because it was sometimes the only time I had during the day. I also sacrificed a lot of sleep too but whatever you need to do, if you really want to you're going to do it.

I have a few questions going back to the actual product that you have, Learn Scrivener Fast. Here you are, getting ideas for this product and you call yourself the Scrivener Coach, were there any doubts in your mind in terms of becoming that person, the coach for a product that you just started using?



**Joseph Michael:** Yeah. I'm glad you brought that up. That's a fantastic question. That's a huge mental mindset that you have to overcome. A friend of mine, Andy Traub challenged me on this in the beginning because...

**Pat Flynn:** Love Andy.

**Joseph Michael:** Andy's great. He's a brilliant guy, full of ideas. He was telling me at the beginning that I'd be known as the Scrivener coach. He's like "You're going to be the world's greatest Scrivener coach" and I was like "Whoa, whoa." I never really saw myself in that position. I have this efficiency blog over here. I thought that was going to take off.

He's like "Too bad, you found a problem you're solving for people, jump on this! Is anybody else teaching Scrivener at the level you are?"

I was like "Well, no."

He's like "Well then you're the world's greatest Scrivener coach! Own it. You're helping people."

So it was a really big mental block that I had to get over. I'm not an expert but this whole idea of expert really is just you know a little bit more than the average person. I could research things like crazy. I always knew that was a gift that I had, I could really research and I was resourceful. It used to bother me back in the day because I was like "Great. What am I supposed to do with that? My gift is resourcefulness. Whoopee." I was always mad at my gift or whatever.

I finally found a way to research something and teach it and put it out in a way that it was helpful to people. Not only that but my perfectionism, without letting that hold you back too much, I really do believe that quality matters and the way your stuff looks matter. As much as we don't want to believe that online, looks really do matter online. You want to make it look like you have a million dollar product even if you don't. I spent a lot of time investing in that in the beginning.

That was the first hurdle I had to get over. I was even afraid on webinars in the beginning. I was like "What if someone asks me a question about Scrivener and I don't know it? Because I'm still learning it as we go too," but I've learned that just the transparency and the realness with people is like "Hey, if you don't know the answer..." I would tell them, "That's a good question. I'm going to research that for you and we'll



get back to you." I would even tell people "I don't have it all figured out." In fact, I'll go back and watch some of my own video tutorials when I get to a point in Scrivener that I've forgot how to do. People love that. I was afraid to say that live one time and I got so many emails saying "I love how you were just real and you said you go back and watch your own videos. It made us feel like you're a real person."

**Pat Flynn:** That's cool.

**Joseph Michael:** In the beginning I was always trying to pose as this expert know it all and that was part of my whole coming out with my real name. There's this mask we wear in the beginning. Whether it's we're afraid of failure, we don't want people to know the real us. It's really hard to let go of, even for me. Two years later, after having a successful business now, I still have this mask of like - kind of like my name got away from me and Joseph Michael is out there on all these websites, maybe I should just keep it, but you know what? No. I just want to be real.

As I'm teaching people this now, a lot of the clients that I coach now with product creation, these are the kind of things that I tell them. Things that I would do differently in the beginning, all those kinds of things that people ask.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah, that was one thing that I struggled with, with Green Exam Academy back in 2008 when I was writing my eBook and I was like "Why would people want to buy this eBook?" and I was also wondering "How would people consider me the expert when I still have to look up a lot of the answers to questions myself, too?" but like you said, if you are just that person who becomes the place where you can find those questions, whether you know the answers to those questions off the top of your head or not, you become that resource.

As long as you see yourself as the resource, that will provide those answers at some point then that's all you need. Like you said, you just have to be a little bit more knowledgeable than the average person.

To have people be OK with learning from you but also be willing to pay for that time and access as well.

**Joseph Michael:** Yeah. Very well said.

I love the idea of a coach, which was kind of my reason why I chose that. I had coaches in high school that were life changing for me. I like the idea of a coach. They



didn't have to know it all. They screwed up sometimes, they yelled at us players sometimes, but a coach is someone who has invested in you and who will help you along the way.

Even just that branding really helped people get a sense of "Yeah, I can do this. I have a coach behind me now."

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah. That's super sweet.

The question I have and I think a lot of people after listening to this are going to look to see what software they use or programs they are a part of that they can provide more help with. The thing is, it's a little bit scary building a business on the back of another business. Have you considered that in terms of the longevity of what you're doing?

**Joseph Michael:** Sure. In the beginning it was this whim. I honestly, and maybe it was a lack of confidence in the beginning, I never really believed anything was going to totally take off but I was always like, if I could just help a few people then I thought that it would be worth it. I always have this teacher's heart that I like to help people.

I had no idea that it would get to the massive state it is now. When it started to really take off, I remember emailing the folks who created Scrivener, Literature and Latte is the company that created Scrivener. I remember hearing your story about the Green Exam Academy and stories about having to change your domain name and all that stuff and I was like "I don't want that to happen. I better check with them."

So before I ever launched it publicly, I sent an email, sent them a pass to go through the course and said I really want to represent your product well. That's my intention here, I love your product. I've created something that I think can be really valuable.

I got lucky that they are such a great organization and then had nothing but favorable stuff to say. They said they loved what I was doing, they'd always meant to get a training program themselves, but they'd just been so busy developing that they hadn't had time to do it. They really encouraged me and gave me some great feedback of like "I think your course would benefit from having this, this and this in it, and think about wording that this way" and I was like "Wow."



**Pat Flynn:** You did get lucky! I know a lot of companies aren't going to be that friendly with somebody who is going to be making money off of their product and using their domain name.

**Joseph Michael:** Exactly. I think it's really a case-by-case basis. I think I got lucky with Scrivener. They are a lot smaller. They had this dream of helping writers. It's one of the reasons why if you go look at Scrivener, it's \$40. They could have charged three times that much for the value but they wanted to keep it affordable for writers.

Right off of that, I wanted to make sure because then I was going at [Scrivenercoach.com](http://Scrivenercoach.com) and I was like "Are you OK with Scrivener being in the name?" and all of that. It works out pretty well now because I drive a lot of business to them. I help people learn their product better. It's kind of a win-win. They let me use their name and I drive a lot of people to their product and help them use it better, which creates more and more raving fans.

I got really blessed there. I would definitely say before spending too much time, make sure you send that email, get that in writing before you put a whole bunch of time in it.

**Pat Flynn:** That company that you're working with should talk to the company that I work with for Green Exam Academy. For those of you who don't know or might not remember, I have to change my domain name from [inthelead.com](http://inthelead.com), which was a trademark that the United States Green Building Council was using for their program and their exam. I had to change it and it was tough.

It was one of the moments in my life where I wanted to totally quit because I didn't feel like I could handle real business. That was really the first test for me. I thought I was getting sued but it was just the trademark. I switched the domain name, it did a 301 permanent redirect so everything worked out, I kept the traffic and the rankings. But with that domain name I was helping everybody get comfortable with taking the exam and spending more money with them. If only they understood that, I think perhaps they would have been more open but they had other things to focus on, they didn't even consider that.

Anyway, you got really lucky. I think everybody should do their research beforehand. We see products out there that train people to use other things like Facebook training products for example, they all have 'FB' in the domain name, or WordPress, 'WP.'" So there are "workarounds" but it's still a little bit dangerous. You have to get things in





writing if you can or perhaps be able to - I know some companies license the ability to use their trademarks as well.

This reminds me of another podcast episode, it was Matt Donley in [episode 132](#), he built a business helping people use Sketchup, which is a 3D visual creation tool that is awesome and I actually use that as well. This is a very similar story. He was able to get blessings from Sketchup as well. But that's not always the case. I know a lot of people who have created products on how to sell on eBay, who have been completely shut down because eBay is really strict with how people use their domain name and trademark and things like that.

Let's talk about your course specifically because it sounds like from just the conversation we had here, people love the course and people are happy to share, even the people over at Scrivener love it, Michael Hyatt loves it. Why do people love it so much? What about your course do people like? Tell us exactly what they say and what have you done to create it that way?

**Joseph Michael:** Sure. I found a place where my attention to detail pays off. I didn't realize that until in the beginning I wanted to stand out and visual is one of the things that you can really do that, like I said earlier. People are visual, they judge things by the way they look, especially products and things like that.

I bought about 5 or 6 different courses from different niches in the beginning, which was hard then. When you're pinching pennies and trying to explain to your wife why you're spending a few hundred dollars on different courses to help you create yours that you don't know is going work. I did that because I wanted to see how people built their courses, what people liked about them and just pick things out that were good, things that I think I could improve on. I'm so glad I did that because I found things that I liked, that were helpful, the flow made sense, and others that were confusing.

I spent some time researching leaning styles. This always surprises people. It's kind of common sense to me, if I'm teaching something I want to make sure that people get it. It only makes sense to study the learning styles and study the different ways people get information. Visual, auditory and the actual learning part of it too, they all have to go together. What I did on top of that is looked at the recent studies of attention spans too, which are pretty crazy. I think we're officially at 8 seconds, which is our attention span now, right under the gold fish at 9 seconds. That's fantastic. I think a lot of it is due to our culture, our media, YouTube. The average YouTube video is 2.7 seconds that people watch. I took that information and thought "This is in a course so it's really



no different from people watching videos for entertainment or watching them for learning. We have to make it an experience that they want to be a part of. I decided to break the course down into really bite sized pieces, 2/3 minute videos instead of doing 5 or 6 1-hour long tutorials on how to use Scrivener. That would be overwhelming. I wouldn't want to go through that.

That's what I didn't like about the tutorial that came with, it took hours just to go through it. With this massive program I thought "How can I break this down into manageable chunks where people feel like they're making progress and it's not intimidating?" I found the way to do that was to chunk it out.

I have a module in the course called Step by Step Basics and this has 30 training units. Each unit has a video and it's about a specific topic and it's only 2 or 3 minutes. It's manageable so you can go to the next unit and you can do whatever you have time for.

People tell me "I love your videos, they're kind of addicting, I have to keep going through them. If I have an hour lunch break, I can go through and get a lot of them done." Or you can take a whole afternoon, block it out and pretty much go through the whole thing, it's completely up to you.

The other thing I did, which I spent quite a few extra months doing is I thought about things in a way that I wish I would have had this when I was going through it. I'm a really visual learner and sometimes I don't really want to sit down and watch the whole video but I just want to see the steps again. I always love a blog post that a lot of people do where they add screenshots and things like that. That's really helpful to me.

I thought "Let's break down each video that I go through" and I added step by step screenshots of each step with annotations and arrows pointing to and highlighting things that we're calling attention to.

I've done that for each unit as well. If you don't have time to watch a video, you can jump in there and scroll down through the screenshots and see click by click how to accomplish a certain thing.

**Pat Flynn:** That's super cool. That's sort of a step up from ripping the text from the video and transcribing it.

**Joseph Michael:** Yeah. I need to see it.



The other thing that we're always in competition with is people competing against each other. How can we stand out? What is going to be the thing that you're going to do that's going to be the extra mile that other people aren't willing to do? That's huge. You've got to think of, you always say your unfair advantage, and I knew that I could create over the top training. I knew I could have really high video quality. I knew my production quality could be really good because I geek out on that stuff and I do it for fun anyway. I was the guy who was always making the family videos and slide shows and all that. Let's just take that same concept, bring it into training.

The hard part was in the beginning. You don't know if all this time you're spending is going to pay off.

That's a really hard mental thing too because the first 6 months of building this thing was like a rollercoaster. I'd be all high one day, this is going to be awesome. The very next day I'd be like "This is trash, I'm going to quit. I'm spending all this time on something, nobody might not even look at it" and you're sacrificing all these things. The next day you wake up and you're gung ho again. It's crazy, that rollercoaster.

You really have to dive deep and I just believe that this could be helpful. It was 6 months of no feedback but my own belief and of course my wife, who was of course supportive.

Thank God for that, because that really does make a big difference.

These mental hurdles, you have to bust through them. Of course get feedback as quick as you can. One of the things I tell people now, there's an excellent book called The Seven Day Startup that I just read, by Daniel from WP Curve, I believe. It's about, you learn the second you launch. The quicker you get something out there, that's when you actually start to learn and that's when you can go and revise and add the stuff that people actually want.

If I could go back, I wouldn't have taken the months, I would have gotten something out quicker, but that was a hard journey, those first six months. Once you start getting feedback, then it totally feeds you, people are loving it, you're like "Yeah, OK, I can do this!" and everybody was loving the attention to detail, the extra things that I put in there.

That's what I tell people all the time. Study your audience. If it's an overwhelming thing, how can you break it down?



Somebody told me earlier on as well, never underestimate the amount of hand holding that people want.

Sometimes we think that we're going to insult them by being too basic or we want to show off our knowledge maybe. But it's actually the opposite. The more step by step, if you look at something and think "Can I break this down even further?" People actually want that. They want to not think. That's part of my sales copy now and my sales page. We take the thinking out of it, you don't have to think. You just watch the video, we'll show you click by click what to do. And people love it!

**Pat Flynn:** That's cool.

Where do you draw the line between - like you said if you could go back in time, you wouldn't wait six months, you'd launch it sooner. I understand that lean startup methodology where you come out with a minimum viable product, you get feedback and improve it from there. Where do you draw the line between that and launching it early versus making it great and actually having some quality in it?

**Joseph Michael:** Man, that's the tough part right there, especially for someone like me. I struggle with this now and I can relate to some of the things that you said about, you're writing your blog post now and you've come to this peak of quality that people expect from you. That's hard. Now I have this quality expectation with my next thing and I'm struggling with wanting it to have a certain amount of quality but right off the bat, the MVP is not going to be that.

I think what it really comes down to is you want some value to be there so the second you have some value, put it out there. For me, what that looks like is maybe it's one module and I had planned to put six in it, whether that's one module and I attach a price to it, honestly the price doesn't really matter. As long as it's within range, but those things are flexible. Too many people get caught up on having the pricing just right and the model and the three tiers. It's not really necessary.

I started out with a simple [Gumroad](#) link. I uploaded a PDF with literally a link. I didn't have even membership software then. It was just a link that took you to the page. Somebody could have found it. But I didn't let those things stop me. I could always add those later. Let's first see if people are interested.



Use Gumroad, get something up there. Have whatever is available that's quality. If you can make one really good module and just spend time with that. Put it out there and see the feedback. Then build the next good module.

I think that's a good way to go about that. I can't feel comfortable about sacrificing quality, but quantity I guess I can, if that makes sense.

**Pat Flynn:** Yeah it does. One way I like to think about it is whenever we hear about MVP, you hear people say "You just want to put out something that's good enough, it provides that value, it solves that problem, good enough." I like to take it one notch up, don't just make it good enough, make it great enough.

**Joseph Michael:** Yeah.

**Pat Flynn:** It does what it needs to do, but there's also a little bit of extra that is unexpected and I think that is where you truly get those raving fans, people who become customers who become loyal if you're asking them to pay every month for something. So great enough, make it great enough if you're just starting out.

**Joseph Michael:** Absolutely. Always look for those places where you can over-deliver.

**Pat Flynn:** As we close, I have one more question about your course. How are you serving that content? What platforms are you using? Do you have any tips or tricks for that?

**Joseph Michael:** Sure, so it's built on WordPress. I got to do a presentation on this at Fincon just this last year, which we talked about. The 2013 Fincon was my first ever conference, first ever blogging conference. I mainly went because I wanted to meet you, shake your hand and say that you've inspired me and helped me.

**Pat Flynn:** I remember. I remember that we had pizza.

**Joseph Michael:** I remember hearing you talk and that was my first thought of "I can do this." This year, I got to speak at Fincon, which was awesome because a year's time. It's just built on a WordPress course. I got to do this presentation and show people exactly how I built a Do it Yourself course, I don't know any code or programming language or anything like that.



Everything I've done is kind of like a hack. I wanted to create something that was visually appealing. Instead of using text links for instance, I just created images and linked them to text and things like that, and their buttons. People always comment "How did you create this, is that some kind of special code?"

It's like "No, it's actually an image, you can do it in Keynote or Photoshop." There's all these little tips and tricks to make your thing look good before you have money to invest in it.

It's just a WordPress site but using a plugin, which is one of my absolute favorites, game changer plugin. [WP Courseware](#). It's developed to where you can add modules and units and on your WordPress site, it's just like drag and drop easy. I tell people on the presentation, if you can write a blog post, you can create a course because it really is just like you're writing a blog post and then you organize it into a module or a unit and you can change things up as you go.

For me, this was life changing because I have to have a framework first when I build something. I could build the framework first and then plug in information and rearrange it as I went.

It's under \$100 for the plugin.

**Pat Flynn:** I know the guys who created it, they actually took one of my courses back in the day, which is pretty cool. So WP Courseware, thank you for that recommendation. I was hoping you would say something that people can just plug and play and put into because I know that's what a lot of people are searching for. So thank you for that.

Now, as we close, you briefly mentioned that you're doing something next. Can you talk about what that is really quick or are you just trying to stick with the Scrivener stuff?

**Joseph Michael:** No. I don't like to have all my eggs in one basket. I've always wanted to teach something in the blogosphere or the niche of how we can help people create products but I never wanted to be that guy that did that before having done it himself.

Now I'm finally at the point where I've spent the last two years creating a product and it's gone over to do multiple six figures and it's worked. I've followed a lot of advice,



done a ton of research. Now I'm to the point where I'm being asked so many questions of "Can you show me how you put this together?", "Can you show me how you've done this?" and I'm excited to start teaching that because I've developed a framework that I believe works really well. It's not rocket science but there is a system. There's a system for creation that you go by and there's a psychology behind the products.

So I'm bringing that in, I'm starting something new called [ProductCreationLive.com](https://ProductCreationLive.com) and I'm going to be going on live and teaching people tips and tricks and things I've learned about product creation and helping where I can.

I'm going to have a special page just for the listeners of SPI, so you can go to [productcreationlive.com/SPI](https://productcreationlive.com/SPI), we'll have a special gift for you there that will explain more about this. If you're looking for product creation, you have ideas and you want to see the technical stuff, it's really going to be more of a do it yourself thing. There's a lot of things you can outsource but for the people boot strapping in the beginning, I didn't have the extra money to outsource anything. It was all figuring out these hacks so I could do it myself.

I'm excited to share a lot of that. I've got to do a couple of presentations on it. It's received really well. I'm really pumped to share my knowledge and branch out a little bit there.

**Pat Flynn:** Nice. Super cool man. Thank you for sharing that and for the special offer, I think that's really cool and I think people will definitely appreciate that. Your stuff looks great. I'm so excited for you and the future. Thank you so much for coming on, we appreciate your time.

**Joseph Michael:** Thanks for having me Pat. This was one of my first goals I ever set was to be able to come on your podcast and actually add some value and have a business. So thank you.

**Pat Flynn:** That's awesome. We're talking with Joseph Michael Nicoletti from [learnscribenerfast.com](https://learnscribenerfast.com), [josephmichael.net](https://josephmichael.net) and also that offer at [productcreationlive.com/SPI](https://productcreationlive.com/SPI).

Joseph you rock, thank you so much.

**Joseph Michael:** Thanks Pat.



**Pat Flynn:** Alright I hope you enjoyed that interview with Joseph Michael from [learnscribenerfast.com](http://learnscribenerfast.com). A lot of amazing things going on. He also mentioned that great deal for us, give away at [productcreationlive.com/SPI](http://productcreationlive.com/SPI). I'll be excited to check that out too.

For those of you listening, if you want to get the show notes and all the links mentioned and all the resources mentioned in this particular episode, as always all you have to do is go to [smartpassiveincome.com/session142](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session142) and it will all be right there. You can also head that way to leave a comment as well.

I also want to take a moment to thank today's sponsor which is [99designs.com](http://99designs.com), an amazing site that I've used plenty of times in the past to help with some logo design and some landing page design.

If you don't know what it is, what you do is if you're looking to get anything designed in your business from logos to webpages to anything like a T-shirt, a sticker or even a food truck, all you need to do is enter your design description which you want. They have some little graphs and things you can plug and play and click on to make sure that you are getting the right style that you want. What happens is several designers will come and try to come up with the best design for you. You get to pick the one that you like best.

It's such a cool way to get involved with the design process, especially if you don't have a lot of cash to hire a personal designer right now. Not only is it relatively affordable but it is also a quick turnaround as well and you can work with the designers along the way as they start creating these logos for you. You can even have your friends and family and your audience vote on their favorites as well to help you make a decision.

If you go to [99designs.com/SPI](http://99designs.com/SPI), you'll get a \$99 power pack of services for free, which you can add to your next design campaign to help you get more access to more designers and a bunch of other cool things.

Thank you so much. I think this was a wonderful way to start the New Year and you're going to hear more success stories like this from people outside of the online business, online marketing space. I have a ton of them in the bag for you.

Finally, I just wanted to remind you if you have a question for me, the best way to ask a question is to go to [askpat.com](http://askpat.com), which will redirect you to my Ask Pat podcast on my page and you'll be able to ask a question there and also listen to the other 250





questions that I've already answered. Your question may be there already. That's another podcast you can find on iTunes as well. About 8 to 10 minutes per episode. It's one of my favorite things to do. Each week I go in and find 5 questions from the number of voicemail questions that come in and I answer them on the show.

So you might get featured on the show and if you do, you get an Ask Pat T-shirt sent to you for free.

So check that out. Again, that's [askpat.com](http://askpat.com).

Show notes for this episode can be found at [smartpassiveincome.com/session142](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session142).

Thank you so much for listening in. I appreciate you and have an amazing happy new year. Obviously have a safe day but this is the start. This is the beginning of the New Year. Let's make it the best year ever.

Cheers. Take care and I'll see you in the next episode of the smart passive income podcast.

Thanks for listening to the smart passive income podcast at [www.smartpassiveincome.com](http://www.smartpassiveincome.com)

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

- [JosephMichael.net](http://JosephMichael.net)
- [LearnScrivenerFast.com/SPI](http://LearnScrivenerFast.com/SPI)
- [EfficientLifeSkills.com](http://EfficientLifeSkills.com)
- [\*Let Go\*](#)
- [How to Teach a 6-Year-Old to Tie Shoes in 5 Minutes](#)
- [5 Reasons I Switched to Scrivener for All My Writing](#) (Post by Michael Hyatt)
- [Gumroad](#)
- [SPI Episode 132](#)
- [WP Courseware plugin](#)
- [Productcreationlive.com/spi](http://Productcreationlive.com/spi)
- [Today's sponsor: 99designs.com](#)

