



SPI Podcast Session #161 – How to Stand Out of the Crowd With Dorie Clark

Show notes: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session161>

This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session #161.

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, he loves Disney movies as much as his kids do, Pat Flynn!

Pat: What's up, everybody? Pat Flynn here and thank you for joining me in Session 161 of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Thank you for all the love, the support, the ratings and reviews and iTunes.

Also if you haven't yet done so, please subscribe to the show because that way you can get this content directly uploaded to your device every single Wednesday. That's when these episodes come out, and I have a whole slew of episodes ready for you already recorded and they are amazing, just like this episode today which features a woman who knows what she's talking about when it comes to finding ideas.

We break down how to find great ideas, the different types of ideas you can use to build a brand new business online, and also how to build a huge following around those ideas. Why don't we just skip all the chatter and get right into the interview. Here is Dorie Clark from DorieClark.com and author of *Standout*. Here we go.

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Pat: Dorie, what's up? Welcome to the show. Thank you for coming on.

Dorie: Hey Pat. I'm so glad to be on. Thanks for having me.

Pat: This is going to be a lot of fun. Tell us a little bit about who Dorie Clark is, before we get into all that good stuff we're going to get into.



Dorie: Absolutely. I am an author. My first book came out two years ago in 2013. It was called *Reinventing You* from Harvard Business Review press, about personal branding and professional reinvention. Then I have a new book out called *Stand Out: How to Find Your Breakthrough Idea and Build a Following Around It*.

When I'm not writing I teach business school for Duke University and give a lot of talks and do consulting.

Pat: That's very cool, and you told me just before we started recording that you were on TV yesterday, which is awesome. So you're over in New York, and what were you on TV for?

Dorie: I was on MSNBC talking about Trevor Noah, the new host of The Daily Show, and his errant tweets and what that means about your digital reputation in the modern era, so it was a fun conversation.

Pat: That's really cool. Now your book, *How to Find Your Breakthrough Idea and Build a Following Around It* – why did you choose to write about this?

Dorie: I was really interested in the topic because, as I'm sure you've noticed and many of your listeners have, these days it's just harder than ever to breakthrough. There's so much noise. Everybody in the world is screaming and trying to get their message across. It's great in the sense that without gatekeepers more people are able to express their ideas, but the downside of that and the new problem that people are facing is that it's harder than ever to actually be heard.

I would like to live in a world where the best ideas really do win, so I wrote *Stand Out* because I wanted to try to create a book essentially with some life hacks, with some strategies for people who have great ideas who want to somehow break out and get noticed, so they'll know how to do that as efficiently as possible.

Pat: I like that. When I got your book I thought it was just all about taking the idea that you already head or taking the business that you're already in, and then how to stand out from everybody else, but it seems like it all starts even before that. It starts with the idea. You even say in your tagline, "How to find your breakthrough idea."

For those of you who are listening who might not even have started yet, maybe you're still searching for that breakthrough idea, Dorie, how can we help these people out? How do we help people find their breakthrough idea?



Dorie: Absolutely, Pat, and I think it really is an important point because a lot of us start out and we don't necessarily know where we're going to make our mark. A lot of it is an iterative process.

For me, I started out as just a general marketing consultant. I would do marketing plans and social media plans for companies, and that was great but it wasn't very specialized. But for me, I had started doing a lot of blogging and in 2010 I wrote a post for the Harvard Business Review called "How to Re-Invent Your Personal Brand."

That was not meant to be my definitive statement to humanity, it was just one blog post that I had done out of many, but that post really resonated for some reason. I actually got asked to turn the blog post into a magazine article for the Harvard Business Review, and when the magazine article came out I got approached by three different literary agents asking me if I would be interested in writing a book.

That sounds like great luck and serendipity, but for literally years before that I had been trying. I'd written three different book proposals and it didn't go anywhere. It got rejected by everybody, so this was really the thing that just worked. It just clicked, but I had to try a lot of different things to find it. I think many people are in that position. They might know generally the field they want to play in, but they don't necessarily know that breakthrough idea.

In *Stand Out* I interviewed about 50 top thought leaders in a cross-section of different fields, everybody from business thinkers that your listeners are probably familiar with – people like [inaudible 5:32] and David Allen and Tom Peters and Seth Godin – and also people in science, people in genomics, people in urban planning, to try to figure out how they did come up with those ideas.

It turns out there's five major ways that people do it, and I'm happy to get into any of them.

Pat: Let's start from the top.

Dorie: All right, fantastic. I'll give you the really brief overview and we can delve further. #1 is to start out with a niche strategy and then expand outward strategically.

This is something I think you've done really well, Pat, with all the different sites that you've done. It's very hard to make a mark if you just start out and say, "I'm going to



be the expert in technology,” or “I’m going to be the expert in politics.” You’re competing with the entire world. By starting with something very narrow and distinct – whether it’s food trucks, whether it’s smart passive income sources – you can make a name for yourself.

The secret, though, is you don’t want to be pigeonholed forever doing that. You want to expand out so that you move into new territory from there. You might start with the Smart Passive Income podcast, and before long it’s successful. People consider you a recognized expert on podcasting in general or business in general.

Pat: I’ve seen that happen in several niches, not just with myself but with a lot of other people too. They start with something and then they sort become known as an expert in that space.

For example, for my Green Exam Academy site, which helped me become an expert teaching people how to pass this little exam in the architecture industry, I probably could have taken that further and helped people pass other exams in the architecture industry, and then maybe become this sort of world-renowned architecture exam guy instead of just the LEED guy, so you kind of expand out from there.

As I always say, the riches are in the niches, but it’s hard because I think a lot of people don’t know, like how do we quantify what’s small enough or what’s too small?

Dorie: It’s an important question and you’re exactly right, too. A really interesting thing is that when you are expanding out from your niche you can go in a million different directions. Clearly you chose not to become the exam guy. You moved in a different direction, but there was and is that potentiality.

In terms of determining the audience size, I think really the way that I would think about is a good niche is one that is small enough that you can become the clear master of it because the big players in the industry only talk about it periodically.

For instance, if technology is your thing, Tech Crunch and Engadget might be the big players. They’re not going to be writing about specifics of wearable technology every single day. They’re going to have things periodically. If it’s big news it will be on there, but it’s not wearables all the time. If you start a wearables blog, you very quickly can become an expert just because you’re creating such a volume of content that other folks are not. But how narrow is too narrow?



I think the question is really what is your goal with it? If it's actually really narrow but you're looking to become an expert to drive consulting business, that's fine. But if you're looking for something like page views or advertising or whatever, then you want to basically say, "Who are the people that are interested in this? Is it broad enough interest that I can get the eyeballs I need to be sustainable with my business model?" It's a matter of understanding your model and then working backwards from it.

Pat: Right, that's really important. When starting out, where does that seed idea come from, because really you can go any which way. Does it come from passion? Does it come from what people ask you the most questions about? Where does one even get the initial seed for finding a niche?

Dorie: It varies. One common path is actually the one I think you took, Pat, which is solving your own problem. You were looking to pass an exam, you created information to help you do that, and realized, "Oh, other people are in this situation too." That's a really standard one.

Another way that people are able to come up with really interesting areas to focus on – one that I included in my book *Stand Out* – is kind of emblematic and it comes really from drawing in a different way on your personal experiences.

There's a woman that I profiled named Rose Shuman. She's a relative neighbor of yours, based in Santa Monica. She grew up in a nice suburban family lifestyle just outside DC. When she was 18 years old her family took a trip to Nicaragua, which is where her stepmother was from, to visit her stepmother's family. It was shortly after the Contra war had ended and the entire country was just decimated. There was nothing there. There were no traffic lights.

She was so struck by it, it made such an impression on her, she decided that she wanted to devote her life to doing international development work, so she ends up doing this. She learns about the field and does a lot of different things.

One day she's walking around. By this point she's in her early 20's and she sees a call box, like these boxes you might have at a transit station where you push a button and you talk to somebody and answer a question. People see these every day. This is just a common part of an urban landscape but because of her experiences, because of her training, all of the sudden it clicked in her mind.



She had been thinking literally for years about the problem of how do you bring internet access to the poor, and all the sudden she said, "Wait a minute, if you could install these call boxes, people don't have to have computers. They don't even have to understand what the internet is because all you need to do is push a button and ask someone a question, and at the other end there are bilingual translators sitting there and googling the answers."

She's created a non-profit called Question Box, which has become a huge player in improving lives across Africa and India as a result of that. That's something that came from her family history and her background. She was able to see things in a way that other people couldn't, because of what was most unique about her.

Pat: That's really cool. She didn't obviously have that kind of itch herself that she needed to scratch, but she saw that there was a need and she kind of put two and two together and found a solution. That's really awesome. That's really cool.

So you had mentioned a niche strategy, kind of starting narrow and growing out from there if you wanted to, and you said there are four others that we could talk about in terms of that breakthrough idea. I don't know if we've covered those already in the other follow-up questions, and I'm just getting deeper and deeper here. Why don't we go back to the list here.

Dorie: Absolutely, let's dive in. I love it. #2 is about combining disciplines. The reason this is so fruitful is that if you are coming strictly from one field, just being steeped in one mentality, it's actually really hard to see how you can do things a different way. It's like the fish in water. It's like, "What water?"

I think for a lot of people who are so deeply immersed in one perspective, that's how they see it, but if you're able to take different professions or even maybe just combining experiences you've had, hobbies you've had, things that you've studied in-depth that other people haven't, and mash them, you can begin to really have different insights because all of the sudden you're able to compare and contrast and say, "Wait, this works over here. Why don't we try it here?"

Listeners of your show I'm sure will be familiar with *The Lean Startup* by Eric Ries, which is a perfect example of this. Here's a guy who ended up starting a movement, writing a best-selling book, and he did it by taking start-ups – technology entrepreneurship – and combining it with almost the most unlikely thing possible, which is the lean manufacturing that Toyota pioneered to improve automotive manufacturing.



It's like the ultimate industrial behemoth practice, and he melded them together and created something new and valuable.

Pat: Right, and it's been completely revolutionary for how people create businesses and do start-ups. I've adopted a lot of Eric Ries's philosophy in my own business too, so that comes from the manufacturing industry, you were saying, but he kind of brought it over and adopted it for a whole new set of people.

Dorie: Exactly.

Pat: That's awesome. I love that. Let's keep going.

Dorie: All right. The third one has been very fruitful for people in coming up with their breakthrough idea. The umbrella is creating original research. This could really be all kinds of things. This could be doing surveys. This could be creating case studies. This could be doing product reviews. It could be any number of things. It could be a quantitative analysis where you're crunching data, crunching the patterns you find in Twitter feeds or whatever it is.

The reason that this is so important is that in the internet era everybody has opinions. Everybody has their own theories about why such-and-such works or why such-and-such sucks, but what is much harder to find is actual new information and facts. If you're creating that somehow, you're actually really going to make yourself a player because you're injecting something new into the discourse that other people are then going to take up and talk about.

This does not have to be expensive. You don't have to be commissioning international surveys or things like this. I actual profile in *Stand Out* a guy named Michael Waxenberg, who started out very unlikely. He was an IT manager at a financial services company. He and his wife were planning to buy a co-op in New York City so they started just going to open houses. They wanted to research this so they could make a smart decision.

He got so into it, he visited so many open houses, and then he posted very, very detailed reviews on this website, StreetEasy. He very quickly built up a reputation among people who use that site as being something of an expert on the housing in his neighborhood, so he started getting a stream of people saying, "Oh, I want to work with you. Will you represent me when I buy this house?"



The only problem was he wasn't a Realtor, so he was able to actually build this incredibly lucrative side business for himself because before he had even gotten his real estate license he had a stream of clients begging to work with him because he had established his expertise so much through doing these reviews, which cost him no money to do.

Pat: That's really cool, I love that. You had mentioned original research and data, and I was thinking software but this doesn't sound like software at all, this example that you used. The output of the research could be any which way, right?

Dorie: That's exactly right. Something that I would classify as original research is taking a journalistic approach. Instead of just writing a blog post and saying, "Here's what I think about self-driving cars," or "Here's what I think about this new app" – that's great, and if you really have a detailed nuanced perspective, fantastic, but what could be potentially even better is to act like a journalist.

Interview people. Come up with things so that you are really adding something new, rather than just being one more voice in the echo chamber. You don't need technical training to do it. It could qualitative or quantitative.

Pat: It almost sounds like John Lee Dumas from Entrepreneur on Fire and how many interviews he's doing with other entrepreneurs. He's sort of collating all that data and he's doing all the research for everybody, and he's now considered an expert in the space.

Obviously, combined with niche strategy #1, he's kind of branched out from just the person who interviews other entrepreneurs and now he's serving people who are starting podcasts and doing webinars. He's kind of all over the place and it's no wonder why his income reports are even much bigger than my own each month, so he's a great example of that, that a lot of my audience would probably recognize.

Dorie: Exactly. You might wonder how do you make that transition from being behind the microphone to being in front of the microphone in a proverbial sense, but you're exactly right. People look to John and people look to you as experts because through the interviews and the knowledge that you've presented to other people and also gleaned in your own professional development by doing the interviews, you've transformed yourself into a source that's more knowledgeable than almost anybody else.



Pat: That's awesome. So #4?

Dorie: #4 is what I will call attacking a big problem. Basically what this means – and I think it's especially true in the tech world, people talk about this a lot – there's so many small incremental me-too type products. It's sort of the equivalent of, "Oh, it's Uber for window washing," and you're like, "Oh really?" Just nobody cares.

If you want to get noticed, if you want to break out, if you want to build a reputation as an expert and a thought leader, part of the challenge is picking a subject that is worthy enough to elicit other people's attention, to make them care.

A quote that I really like on this is from Peter Diamandis, who wrote the books with Steven Kotler, *Bold* and *Abundance*. He says, "The fastest way to make a million dollars is to help a billion people." That's kind of the attitude we need. What is a problem worth solving and how do we go at it? Because even if you don't solve it, if you're making good progress, that's impressive enough on its own.

One example that I cite in *Stand Out* is the story of this woman named Rita McGrath, who is a professor at Columbia Business School. She is recognized in academic circles as being literally one of the leading strategists in the world. They do rankings of academics and she's in the top 10 without fail.

Part of how she established her reputation is through something that a lot of people are aware of and concerned about. I think there's a fairly common understanding that the speed of disruption has picked up. You can suddenly go from Blackberries being completely ubiquitous in 2007 to them being off the charts and nobody's carrying them within two years. Things are moving fast. We all know this but the problem is we don't necessarily know what to do about it.

She wrote a book that came out two years ago called *The End of Competitive Advantage*, and literally this was a book about what do you do now that disruption is coming more frequently? What are the steps that you take? Now, that is a worthy challenge if you're willing to go head-on into that and come up with specific recommendations.

She suggested things like instead of companies doing annual budgeting they should actually switch to quarterly budgeting because they need to move that much faster, things like that. If you are able to put forward real solutions to problems that people are about, then you're going to get noticed.



Pat: That's huge, and I like what you said about how when you try to solve a huge problem, even if you get halfway there it's still a great solution. It reminds me of a Tim Ferriss quote, actually. He said, "When you try to do something big it's hard to fail completely." It's along the same lines. I was just remembering that when you were talking, and I agree with that.

There's a lot of big problems out there, and I think the big problems intimidate people, though. They might not feel like they're quite qualified to sort of tackle those problems.

Dorie: I think it's true. I think some people do shy away from it. On the plus side, that actually means that if you are willing to engage there's less competition there, which makes it worthwhile if you're bold enough to do it.

It may seem completely counterintuitive, but there's a lot fewer people who are gunning to be CEO than there are gunning to be Vice President because a lot of people just disqualify themselves and think, "Well, that other thing is too hard," so that's part of the secret sauce.

The good thing about these five strategies is that you don't have to do all five of them. You can pick one. If you can pick one and execute it well, that is absolutely enough to make your name.

Pat: You talked about the niche strategy, becoming an expert in a small space and kind of growing out from there. The second one was combining disciplines. The third one was creating original research. The fourth was attacking a big problem, and what is #5, Dorie?

Dorie: The fifth and final one, Pat, is what I call creating a framework, and this is a little bit counterintuitive for most people. I think most of us assume that for almost any discipline that we're dealing with, almost any problem, that because humanity has existed for millennia the fundamental precepts of the field have been talked about and figured out.

We might think, "Well, the big stuff has been figured out. We just kind of add around the edges," but the truth is, if you look at it, it is actually astonishing but the fundamental frameworks of many fields have not been articulated, and I'll give you a few examples of what I mean. If you can do this for your field, it's actually one of the strongest and most powerful things that you can do.



You take something like influence and persuasion, and clearly this is a topic that is of concern to many people. People have been interested in this from the beginning of time, and it wasn't until the past 20-30 years that Robert Cialdini, the eminent psychologist, actually was able to break it down and say, "You know what? All this influence and persuasion, people have been talking about it for a long time, but if you break it down there are only 6 ways that people persuade each other," and he articulated these 6 ways.

Similarly, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross – people have been experiencing grief unfortunately for millennia. She says, "There's 5 stages of grief that you go through." Abraham Maslow has the hierarchy of needs where he's talking about what motivates people, what makes people happy.

It's these frameworks that literally once they have been articulated they make so much sense and help people understand the world in such a different and better way, that almost every time they're even glanced upon you have to mention those people because they have become so central to how we see the world.

Find a place where you can create a structure, where you can create a framework, just like David Allen did, for instance, in *Getting Things Done*. You may think, "Okay, productivity. Why does that need a framework?" but he created one and has become enormously popular as result. So that's the 5th and final strategy where people can really break out and find a way to make a contribution.

Pat: Is that more than just a how-to guide on something? It seems like it's a little bit deeper than that. It seems a little intimidating to just transform how something's been done for so long, for example.

Dorie: I think there's different ways to build up to it. For instance, when I interviewed David Allen he was telling me about how he created *Getting Things Done*. If you look at it from the end, if you look at it as a finished product you might say, "Oh my gosh, how did he ever do this? This is so comprehensive. I could never come up with something like that," but what he told me was that literally he had been working in the trenches practicing as an organizational consultant for 20 years before even writing his book.

He told me, "Dorie, it wasn't 10,000 hours, I probably spent 20,000 or 30,000 hours literally sitting next to executives at their desk helping them organize things." So by the



way he got around to writing his book in 2000 he knew this backward and forward. He had been thinking about it for years.

You don't have to start out knowing everything. It's perfectly fine to let things marinate and then share your ideas when you're ready. Different strategies are going to work at different times. I think that's key.

Another point that I make in *Stand Out* is that it's great if you can create an overarching framework, but there's also ways to create a structure in more limited ways. For instance, in a totally different field there's a guy that I profiled – no relation to David Allen – named John Allen. John Allen is a well-known bicycling advocate and he has created – it sounds like an oxymoron – but it's a bicycling manual bestseller.

He took these fundamental principles of bicycling, and these were not his original ideas. They were actually distilled from a guy who's like the ultimate kind of guru of bicycling strategy named John Forrester. Forrester was this kind of arcane argumentative guy, so what John Allen did was he boiled down Forrester's ideas into literally a 40-page booklet. He did it in such an accessible way, such a helpful way, that the booklet reprint rights were purchased by state departments of transportation.

Multiple states now have issued it – the Ohio bicycle manual, the Arizona bicycle manual, things like this. It's sold nearly half a million copies as a result of John Allen taking these big ideas by this abstruse thinker and boiling them down in a very clear way and in a way that people say, "Wow, that makes sense. I need that."

Pat: That's awesome. I love that. That's so cool. So we talked about finding that breakthrough idea, and I think we've got a great framework here, five strategies to find that idea if you haven't got one already. If you take that and you find something, or maybe you have one already, let's go to Part 2. How do we build a following around that idea?

I know several ways. I've done it many different ways myself. There's a lot of different platforms where you can get an audience and sort of magnetically have people come your way, and connecting with other influencers, but do you have a framework like with finding an idea on building a following?

Dorie: I do actually, and I'd love to get your take as well, Pat, based on your experience because you've done such a great job. What I discovered in the course of



interviewing these 50 top thought leaders is that in general there's a 3-step process that people need to follow when it comes to building their following.

To boil it down, it starts out with building your network. It then goes to building your audience. Then the final step is what I call building your community. I'm glad to get into more depth about any of them, but ultimately it's about being strategic and incremental about who you share your message with and when.

Pat: Right, so it's not like just set up a blog and start writing about it, but actually having some sort of vision of what the steps are and what to do first and who to connect with, actually taking a smart cuts kind of way.

Dorie: Exactly. I think for too many people they get an idea and they immediately say, "Okay great! I'm going to start sharing it. I'm going to start blogging about it," and they put it out there, then they don't get a response and they get discouraged and say, "Well, I guess that wasn't a good idea. I guess that didn't work."

That's actually unfortunate because a lot of good ideas get thrown away at that point, when actually if you just tweaked it 10% or 15% it actually might work really well. You just need to go through this first phase. You've got to do it in order.

Building your network is really about finding this group of trusted advisors, trusted friends, colleagues, people who you can bounce ideas off of. Who's your community? Who can give you the feedback you need to get, to get better from? I know you've talked about mastermind groups and things like that. How can you bring that into your life?

If you do, you can get feedback so that when you reach that second phase about building your audience and communicating with the broader world, you're more likely to be going out there and going public with a really solid idea that people are going to be responding to when you start blogging, speaking, podcasting and things like that.

Pat: Obviously I'm a huge proponent of getting connected with people who are going to help lift you up and encourage you, that friendly alliance as I always say. [Episode 155](#) is about masterminds completely, and you actually get an inside listen on a mastermind group that I have that meets every week.

I think the big question in here is for mastermind groups it's easy when you've gotten started already, because you can find other people who've already started, people in



and around your level, but even before you get started you're saying you've got to find your network. How do you do that?

Dorie: I think early on it's really a question of finding people. At any point you want to find like-minded people, but those people don't necessarily have to be doing literally the same thing that you are. You want to get people, more than anything, who are smart, who care about you, and who have the right attitude and mentality.

The thing that will kill you is if you are relying on people to give you guidance and they're always naysayers. They're always finding what's wrong with it. Of course you want people who will honestly tell you if your idea is bad, but you don't want someone who is always going to say, "Well, what about this?" or "That's never going to work." You want people who are the smartest people you know, and also people who have heart and are looking out for you.

Whether that person is in a different field or not early on, that's actually okay. Over time as you start to go to conferences, as you start to refine your sense of where you want to be and what realm you want to play in, you're going to organically meet more people who are doing exactly the thing that you're doing, whether it's being a food blogger or whatever.

It's getting started, and then over time you can add to your groups, you can get multiple groups, and you can iterate. You don't even have to have formal arrangements. It's just about finding a way to bring those people close to you.

Pat: Right, you want to find somebody in-between the naysayers, which are the people who don't believe in you, obviously, and your mom who's just going to say, "Oh yeah, darling, that's great." You want somebody, like you said, to be completely honest with you the whole time.

How does one gauge into their radar for somebody who would be great for that? Is it sort of more of a gut feeling or is there anything quantifiable to find the right people, or is it like you said, you just kind of know?

Dorie: In *Stand Out* I actually write about a woman who had I think a really interesting story. Her name is Kare Anderson, and I profiled her because she actually has been a part of two different mastermind groups, one that has been going for nearly 30 years and one that's been going for 25 years, so the longevity is astounding.



Pat: Yeah, it's like I need to go to the hospital because it's so long. Sorry, that was a bad joke. I was trying to make something funny because I hear the sirens in the background, but then you're in New York – so for that long in a mastermind group?

Dorie: Exactly. She said when I interviewed her that this has literally become the most singular professional experience of her life because she knows these people practically better than she knows her family. Over time they've met every single month, whether it's in person or on Skype, and you build up this base of understanding and trust, this ability that if you feel like someone is giving you a little bit of bull you can push back, and it's really valuable.

Here are some tips that she shared. The first thing is that you do not want to invite people in too quickly. That's a big mistake. It's like getting married too quickly. You want to have a courtship. If someone strikes your fancy as someone that you think might be a good member, get to know them one-on-one first. Have a few coffee dates. If you still think they seem promising, bring them together in some kind of a casual social situation with other people who are in the group or who you're also considering for the group to see what the chemistry is like.

You might get derailed if one person, who might have been fine in a one-on-one, but in a group setting is really domineering or they always want to be talking or something like that. You want to suss these things out before you ink anything.

Pat: That's great advice. Just get to know them first before you make any formal arrangements there. Once you build this network, you have people who you connect with who are going to be there to help you because you're going to be there to help them too, before you even start anything what do you do with that network? I'm assuming you just talk about what you're going to do and just request that honest feedback.

Dorie: That's right. The way that Kare Anderson runs her group – and obviously people can make their own modifications, but I think as sort of a general template it's a pretty good idea – every month they literally just kind of go around in a circle, either literally or metaphorically online, and each person says two things.

One is a request that they have of the group. Maybe it's, "I'm really trying to build up my speaking business this year, so I'm looking for referrals to speaking engagements, especially in XYZ fields or especially in the Bay Area" or whatever it is. The second piece is that they talk about an offer that they have for other people.



They need to sort of come prepared with something that they have, and it doesn't literally have to be a transactional thing. It could just be, "Hey, I found this amazing app and it's really made my bookkeeping so much simpler and I want to tell you guys about it because I think you might be having a similar problem." Or it could be actual referrals for clients. It could be, "Hey, two months ago you mentioned that you wanted to update your website and you needed to find a good web designer. I just met someone that I think would be perfect. Can I connect you guys?"

It's coming with both the ask and the give, and everyone goes around the circle. They keep meticulous notes and literally do refer back over time so that they can constantly be in a mode of giving and reciprocating.

Pat: I love that. I absolutely agree with that. What are your thoughts on a mentor vs a network?

Dorie: Mentoring is actually a really interesting question. In fact, I wrote a free ebook about that very question. If people are interested they can Google *Dorie Clark mentorship 2.0* and download that. It's based off of a chapter that I have in my first book, *Reinventing You*, so I have lots of thoughts about it.

The basic idea is that I actually really believe that the idea that we have of mentorship as a culture is wrong. It's outdated. My thoughts really were crystallized when I interviewed this guy named Tom Delaw, who's a Harvard business school professor, for my Forbes blog. He was telling me that he really believes that mentorship is broken these days, largely because of economic shifts that have happened over the last 20 years.

It used to be that more senior professionals – let's say people in their late 50's or early 60's – were the folks that were at the top of their game, and they were able to begin sort of shedding some of their responsibilities. They'd still stay on, but they weren't constantly having to do day-to-day work so they had the time and the interest and the bandwidth to mentor junior employees.

That is gone now because of economic pressures. If they're going to keep having their salaries and keep being around they are required to be rainmakers, so everything else has gotten off the table. They don't have time to be mentors.



Everyone would like to have a mentor, and very few people are willing to take time to be a mentor. So if we're actually going to be able to be successful in learning from other people, what I suggest in *Reinventing You* is that we need to reconceptualize mentorship.

Instead of looking for this one perfect unicorn of a person who is exactly who we want to be in 10 or 15 years and is willing to take us under their wing, we should instead be thinking more expansively about a mentor board of directors, where we're seeking to learn individual discrete skills, traits or attitudes from a variety of different people, whether they are senior to us, whether they're our colleagues, or maybe they're even our employees or our interns.

Pat: I like how you said "unicorn," meaning that they don't exist, but if I want to better my speaking career I find somebody to help me with that. If I want to better my writing I find somebody to help me with that. If I want to better men's fashion I can find somebody to help me with that.

Dorie: Exactly. It's like a la carte mentoring.

Pat: Then you actually talk to them and you ask them to become a mentor and that sort of thing, or can it be just sort of "Here's a guy. He has a blog. He's awesome. I love what he does. I'm just going to follow what he does and get inspiration from him."

Dorie: You can certainly have mentors from afar. That's absolutely legitimate. Many people have "mentors" from the past, great historical figures whose biographies they read. Certainly if there's a celebrity or a person from history that you admire, you can totally do it that way.

If it's a real life person you actually have two different choices, which I outline in *Reinventing You*. One is literally, as you say, after a certain period of time – you don't want to spring this on somebody when you're first meeting them, but after a certain period of time after they've gotten to know you and vice versa, you can ask them to be your mentor. If you do that it's really important to specify what that means.

The reason I say that is that for a lot of busy people, asking to be their mentee stresses them out a little bit because they think, "Oh my gosh, what does this person want from me? Is this going to take a lot of time?" So it's really important to say something like, "I would love it if you'd consider being my mentor, and that means that every six months



I'll buy you breakfast and you tell me some of your thoughts about questions I might have." That sounds manageable, so people can totally do it.

Pat: I like that a lot.

Dorie: The other option is to have them as a stealth mentor. That means you don't necessarily every explicitly identify them as your mentor, but you just keep showing up. You keep sort of increasing the stakes a little bit.

First it starts out with maybe a one-time coffee, and then at the end of the coffee say, "Hey, this was so helpful. Do you mind if in a couple months maybe we can do this again and I could follow up?" They'll probably say, "Oh sure!" and you keep doing it so that over time they begin to think of you as their mentee, even if it's never explicitly stated.

Pat: I love that. Elon Musk, if you're listening to this right now, I would love to take you out for coffee.

So building your network is Part 1 after you get that idea. Part 2 is building your audience. I'm really interested to hear what you have to say about what it takes to build your audience from there.

Dorie: Absolutely. This is something, Pat, where you've certainly excelled, and I know a lot of your listeners who are inspired by you have probably been doing this as well. This is probably the most visible part of marketing and going viral and things like that. This is the place where you begin to share your ideas with the world. Essentially the goal here is to make you and your ideas findable by like-minded people.

It's not going to do the world any good if they don't know that you're out there, so it's about content creation. It's about doing all the things so that if somebody looks on Google, if they're hunting around, if they're combing through the newspaper or talking to their friends, people say, "Oh, it's so funny you mention that. This guy Pat Flynn was just talking about it." That's what we want to create, where they can just find you, begin to listen to you, and say, "I like how he thinks."

Really content creation is the driver of this section, and the place where really special things start happening is in that shift from the audience – which is where you are speaking to a large group of people – to building a community. That's where people



have bought into your ideas so much, they like them so much, you are no longer the only person talking about your idea. Other people have taken up the mantle.

Just like *The Lean Start Up*, if Eric Ries was relied upon to be the only person to be sort of the one-man band beating the drum of the lean start-up it couldn't actually spread that far. But today literally there's hundreds of thousands of people participating around the world in Lean Start Up MeetUp groups because they find the ideas so useful and so meaningful. They're connecting around the ideas even when Eric is not in the room.

Pat: Right. I've talked about converting your regular audience into a community, and then community into raving fans. I did a whole presentation about that a number of different times, actually. That was one of my popular presentations so I'm fully onto this idea.

I'm curious what are your thoughts or what do you outline in the book in terms of how you convert people who find you, they're like-minded, and how do you convert those people into a community? Obviously other community members can help bring them on-board and that's really important, but what else do you have to add?

Dorie: There are some technical elements. Obviously you want to make things easy for people to share and that sort of thing. If you can find ways to facilitate community-building both online and off, that's great too. But actually what matters even more, what the singular determinative factor is when it comes to whether a community is able to spring up around your idea is the question of how much the idea from its inception is about more than just you.

My sort of perfect example of this is something like Sheryl Sandberg in *Leaning In*. There's a lot of people who are high-ranking executives who write books, and their books do not catch on the way her book did because their book is really just about, "Hey, I'm a powerful executive and I want to write a book." It's sort of an exercise in narcissism.

But she wrote this book and she tried very deliberately for the book to be not just about her but a call to action for women to lean in. Every woman in theory could see a part of herself in this book and ask herself, "Am I actually volunteering enough? Am I asking for that raise enough? Am I raising my hand enough?" It's an idea that people find relevant to themselves, so if the idea is generous, then that from the very beginning enables it to have the capacity to spread.



For something like Smart Passive Income, this is something that people want to talk about because they're learning things. It's benefiting them. They're recommending it to their friends. That wouldn't be the case if it was Pat's podcast where all he does is talk about different stuff that he ate or whatever. It's about adding value to other people.

Pat: Right, and I definitely know the power of the community to help spread the word. This reminds me of how the book *The Joy Luck Club* kind of just spread by wildfire, not because the author did much of the work to market it, but because these little groups started to form where people started to read this book together in book clubs, then it just kind of spread like wildfire from there.

I don't know the reason why that book in particular did it. I didn't do much research on that, but it kind of reminds me of the same thing, just spreading because of the community and people coming together as a result of I guess the experiences that that book brought each of those people.

I've seen this in many different ways. I've seen community be built on Smart Passive Income, and this isn't just for business and books either. This is for all parts of like, like people who are insanely obsessed with Star Trek. They have a name for themselves. They call themselves Trekkies, and every artist now has their own group that they call themselves. The fans call themselves Swifties if you're a Taylor Swift fan, or you're a Little Monster if you're a Lady Gaga fan and all that stuff.

It's absolutely incredible what can happen when you have the community behind you who believes in what you do, who believes in that message. They're going to want to be a part of it and spread it for you. It's almost as if they're a representative of you.

Dorie: That's exactly right, Pat. The phenomena of virality that you're alluding to, for folks who are interested in this further – this was actually a case study in one of the original great turn-of-the-century business books, *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell. It had a chapter about this. In his case he was writing about *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*.

Pat: That's the one, not *The Joy Luck Club*. The Ya-Ya Sisterhood one is the book I meant to say.

Dorie: Absolutely. *The Joy Luck Club* was very similarly popular, you're absolutely right, but it was through the book club structure that it became popular, as you were alluding to. If you read something as an individual, great, fantastic. You might tell a



friend if it comes up, but if you're reading it and it's baked in that you're going to be talking about it with 10 or 15 of your closest friends, that becomes a viral phenomenon. If it's popular in book clubs it begins to have a kind of communal meaning.

Pat: Thank you for saying that because that's exactly where I got it from, *The Tipping Point*. I just referenced the wrong book.

This has been an incredible conversation, almost step-by-step here, which is great. Obviously there's a lot more to the puzzle and I would highly recommend everybody go and check out your book, *Stand Out – How to Find Your Breakthrough Idea and Build a Following Around It* by Dorie Clark. When does it come out?

Dorie: The official launch date is April 21.

Pat: Awesome. Congratulations! By the time this goes live it will have been out for a couple weeks now, so we're going to try to drive some more sales for you. Again this is an incredible book with a lot of great case studies, inspirational but also very "this is how you do it." I'm really glad that you almost built a framework out of all this stuff that's pretty hard to grasp for a lot of people too.

Dorie, where can people find out more about you? Where can people get the book and where can they connect with you?

Dorie: Thank you so much, Pat. One thing I want to mention is for folks who are really interested in thinking through how they can apply these concepts in their own lives, I created a free give-away. It's a 42-page workbook that I adapted from *Stand Out*. It's called "139 Questions to Help You Find Your Breakthrough Idea and Build a Following Around It."

Literally it's questions to ask yourself so that you can hopefully begin to really think about and draw out your own breakthrough ideas. That's available as a free download on my website, www.dorieclark.com. My books are *Stand Out* and *Reinventing You*. They're available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and fine and discerning bookstores almost everywhere. I look forward to connecting with people there, and I'm on Twitter @dorieclark.

Pat: Thank you so much for joining us today, Dorie. We wish you the best of luck with the launch, and thank you for writing your book.



Dorie: Thanks, Pat.

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I hope you enjoyed that interview with Dorie Clark from www.dorieclark.com. An amazing episode and we have the links and resources and everything mentioned all at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session161.

I also want to thank today's sponsors, including a brand new sponsor today, Edgar – a tool that I actually use every single day. You might actually remember Laura Roeder from [Episode 132](#), who talked about social media and also introduced her brand new tool called Edgar. I use Edgar every single day to post on my Facebook group page and also on Twitter. The cool thing is it recycles posts.

Sometimes on these schedulers you write the post ahead of time, and then once it goes out it goes away. Edgar recycles it. What's cool is that people aren't on social media all the time to see the tweets, so you get more out of the content that you're writing, which is great.

It saves all of your updates in a giant library and then automatically fills and refills your queue by pulling updates from that particular library, and every update gets a chance to be seen by followers who haven't seen it before, and it works. It has completely changed how I do social media.

You can check it out at MeetEdgar.com/pat. If you go to MeetEdgar.com/pat you can check it out. Again this is the social media scheduling tool that I use today to recycle and also use and automate and start conversations without me having to do it on my own every single day, because it does it for me. Again it's MeetEdgar.com/pat. Spend less time doing the busy work and you can dedicate more of your time on social media to the parts you actually enjoy.

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Thank you again for listening to this episode. I look forward to serving you in next week's episode. Next week look forward to it because we have a success story, an amazing one from somebody who created their first online course and was crushing it. He tells us all about how he did that, so I'll see you next week. Cheers. Keep crushing it.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income podcast at www.SmartPassiveIncome.com.

Links and Resources Mentioned in This Episode:

DorieClark.com

On Twitter: [@dorieclark](https://twitter.com/dorieclark)

Dorie's books on Amazon: [Stand Out](#) and [Reinventing You](#)

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