SPI Podcast Session #153 –
Systematizing - Pat and Mindy Talk AskPat
and Our Productive Workflow

Show notes: www.smartpassiveincome.com/session153

This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session #153.

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, who took singing lessons for two weeks in college, Pat Flynn!

Pat: What's up everybody? How are you doing today? I hope you're doing well. I'm really excited about this episode because if you remember Episode 138, that was the one I did in a very NPR start-up style. If you haven't heard that yet, go and listen to it. It's really cool. I use a lot of sound effects – not kind of like whacky slapstick comedy-type sound effects, but background music and things like that.

I tell the story of my trip to Columbus, Ohio to meet my team, and in that podcast Episode 138 I actually play recordings of different meetings that I had with my team, and I actually interview some of my team members in coffee shops and things like that.

One of those team members was Mindy Holahan, who's been doing a lot of work for me lately. She's the head of customer service for the Smart Podcast Player, but more than that she helps edit the AskPat podcast. AskPat has just completely exploded and taken off. It's been the best thing that I've done in a while in terms of results, and Mindy was a huge part of that.

After that episode and after people heard her voice and how she sort of got into her role in Team Flynn and what she does for me, and her help for AskPat, a lot of people wanted her to come on and for me to interview her.

There were actually a lot of emails that came in asking, "Pat, we need Mindy to come on to talk about exactly how you run AskPat and what you do and what the work flow is like, and how you are able to together do a 5-episode-per-week podcast," because that's what AskPat is. It's 5 episodes per week. I answer a voice mail from an audience member. You can go check it out at AskPat.com. So that's what today's episode is about.

I actually have Mindy come on and we talk about exactly the work flow and also systematizing, and how you can figure out what things you can do in your business in a much more productive streamlined way. That's what Mindy is really good at, and we talk about that.

We talk about AskPat and exactly the work flow and how that gets put together, and how you might be able to take some of that information and apply it to what you're doing too.

Without further ado, I'm happy to welcome back Mindy Holahan. She's just amazing. You'll hear it. Here we go.

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Pat: Mindy, thank you for coming…[coughing]...hold on…

Mindy: [laughing] Oh, you have to keep that in. I love it!

Pat: [coughing] At least I'm not doing most of the talking here because I'm interviewing you. Geez.

Mindy: [laughing] That was beautiful! I think that's an appropriate way to start a podcast with your audio editor, or one of your audio editors.

Pat: [laughing] I heard a recent episode with Tim Ferriss actually, where he started out the episode with him just coughing a lung, and then it went right into his intro music. Anyway, sorry headphone users, if that was indeed loud.

Anyway, Mindy, welcome to the SPI podcast. Thank you for joining us today for a formal interview between you and I.

Mindy: Thank you for having me. I'm really excited.

Pat: We heard your voice for a little bit in Episode 138. For those of you who might not remember, that's the episode where I did a sort of NPR start-up style story-telling type style episode where we actually have recordings of my visit in Columbus, Ohio, where I met with Mindy and Matt and a few other team members, and Mindy shared who she was and what she did for the team.

Why don't you kind of revisit that a little bit and sort of tell everybody what it is that you do for me and Team Flynn?

Mindy: Sure, absolutely. I touch a lot of the products and the projects and just the things that flow through Team Flynn. The thing that I maybe have the most front-to-back ownership of I think would be [AskPat](#), and then the [Smart Podcast Player](#).

For AskPat, you create the episodes and edit them, and then you just upload them to Dropbox and I take it from your audio from the finish line and get it edited and get it up into Sound Cloud every day so that it launches. On those days when AskPat posts a little late, that's because something in my day kept me from posting it right at 9 am Pacific time.

The other thing that I touch a lot is the Smart Podcast Player. The term there is the product owner. I lead the development team through each development process, where you and I will talk and we'll set priorities for, "This is what we want the next update to look like for the Smart Podcast Player." I'll take your vision and take it to the development team, and we will talk through all the requirements. Then I make sure that they take your vision and they develop it the way you want it, and that we get it out in a timely fashion.

Then Ray really handles the support these days, like he keeps the whole support flow rolling. Then when he has technical questions he talks with me, and if I don't know the answer he talks with the developer, so we've got this nice little team. At this point we have two developers, we have Ray for support and then Dustin for design, and it's really fantastic. It's really fun.

Pat: Yeah, it's been going really, really well. One thing I love about you, Mindy, is it just seems your super power is understanding the processes of how to get things done and the work flows and how to make things systematize and flow really nicely.

That's something I learned when working with you on AskPat, which was sort of the first big project that we've truly worked together on a lot where there was a lot of communication and trying to figure things out. Later in the episode we'll get exactly into how that work flow goes.

We have you here for a few reasons today. One is just after people heard you on Episode 138 I had so many emails coming in from people asking, "We just want to hear more of Mindy." People wanted to hear more of other team members too, but I think

you especially because of just how awesome you are and what you've done for AskPat and how you've made that work out so well. In 2014 that was the best thing that launched in the whole brand, and it couldn't have happened without you.

I wanted to talk about the work flow and how we work together to make that really systematized, because from my point of view, everybody, all I do is I record my answer to somebody else's question that comes in through SpeakPipe, and then I send that to Mindy and that's all I do.

It's just incredible how much that has helped the other podcasts that I have to grow, the brand grow, the authority, and just how much people love it. Again it's a leg of the brand that wouldn't have happened without Mindy.

So for those of you looking to hire other people to help you, this is going to be a great episode for you to understand kind of what your ideal person might be, but also something you could send to somebody you're working with to have them help you out even more, or at least just have something that you can use to reference in terms of how to really systematize and automate things.

Mindy: I'm part of Winning Edits, so I work with and for Matt Gartland, who you also heard on that episode, and one of the things that I think is really interesting is that Matt and I have been friends for a long time and it really leads back to podcasting. We got to be friends when he and I started a podcast together, because I was in love with podcasts and always wanted to be on a podcast.

I introduced him to the podcasting world and he was like, "This is great! We need one of these," so he and I did a podcast together for a little over a year and got to be friends that way.

One of the things that I think we really learned through that process was that he and I complement each other very well. We have very different skill strengths, I would say. I mean we have a lot that overlaps, but Matt is a super-organized person who is amazing at looking at a big picture and breaking it down. He's really good at making sure that everything happens on time, and he's great at just all of these intricate moving parts.

I've tried to learn that, but where I'm really great is my skill is looking at a process and breaking down a process and saying, "This happens, and then this happens, and then this happens." What he can do with people, I can do with systems.

Pat: And it's so good to have that skill. I think anybody doing online business, especially with the tools we have available, with the other people we can hire that we have available to us to help us systematize and automate, this is part of what the whole passive income thing is all about.

Sometimes a human touch is required. Does it have to be yours? No, but you have to have the right people in there to actually provide that human touch, if not a piece of software that can do and achieve the same things.

Perhaps you can talk a little bit about if someone were to come up to you and be like, "Mindy, how can I learn to systematize things like you do?" – or is this a skill that not everybody can have?

Mindy: I don't know. That's a really great question. I always end up in this role. When I had what you'd call a traditional day job, I always ended up being the systems person. It sounds so funny but I understand how programs work really well. Anytime you're doing something over and over and over, if it takes a lot of time, that to me says there's probably a better way. If you're doing a lot of data entry and it seems like, "Man, there's got to be a better way to do this," there probably is.

That is the moment when I go to Google and I search Google. The key to learning how to design good systems or in searching for the answers to designing a good system is to think in the way that the people who built your program thought.

If I want to do something better in Excel, the first question I ask me is, "What would Excel call this? What would the term be that Excel calls this?" like if I tried to look it up in the Help menu, so it's trying to think like the program. You can find a lot of solutions if you can think like the people who designed the program.

I edit audio in [Reaper](#), and this is may be jumping ahead just a little bit. I know a lot of people use [Audacity](#), which is a super-fantastic tool, so the same thing applies to Audacity. If I want to learn a new trick for say like tightening up all of the silences in Audacity, I would ask myself, "What does Audacity call that?" If I can't figure that out, that's the first question I ask.

I would go to Google and type in *tighten up silence audacity* and try to figure out what is the term for that. Then I can learn that new skill. I guess that's kind of how I learn new skills.

One of your best tools for this I think is Lynda.com, which is one of our AskPat sponsors. I would probably say 80% of the things I know how to do I learned from Lynda.com. I love Lynda.com so much. I've had a membership at least 5 years at this point, at least, probably more like 7 or 8 years. I think I was an early user, and it's the best $25 I spend a month.

Pat: That's awesome. Thank you for that. They'll probably appreciate hearing that. I don't even know if Lynda is a sponsor for this particular episode. They might be, but I think they're only doing AskPat but we'll see.

Why don't we talk a little bit about AskPat and the hero story of that and how that all got started. For those of you listening, I'll tell you a little bit about it and then where Mindy came in, and then she can take over, because it was definitely not easy to put together. But since doing it and getting over a lot of the hurdles that both Mindy and I faced together, it's just been incredible.

So what has AskPat done for me? AskPat has accumulated almost 4 million downloads in the last year, which is incredible. It's a 5-day-a-week episode, and I never thought I'd be able to do that because one a week for Smart Passive Income was tough, but again having Mindy on-board was definitely helpful.

It has helped generate thousands of extra dollars per month in sponsorship income. The income numbers aren't quite as high as Smart Passive Income. And also as a by-product it has led to Smart Podcast Player and what that has become, because that was a solution that we custom-built to help serve AskPat, and now that's a product which is really cool.

For those of you who heard me on Episode 149 where Dane Maxwell came on and interviewed me, we talked about how that was sort of just accidentally a solution I came up with because it was an itch I had to scratch of my own, and then it was an itch that other people had to scratch, too.

My first foray into software was back in 2010 when I purposefully spent money to try and build plugins that were just there to make money, and they completely failed.

So it was sort of the result of having AskPat come on-board, obviously more exposure for the brand, more authority and things like, so a lot of amazing things have happened.

When I first started, going back into the archives of the Smart Passive Income, what I used to do – and I did this for maybe 5 or 6 episodes – is I used to put voice mail questions that I got from the audience at the end of those episodes. I think I saw on Michael Hyatt's site that he'd started to do that and I was like, "Oh, that's so awesome, getting your audience involved and having them ask questions."

I really think for those of you who have a podcast, or even if you don't, collecting voice mail questions from your audience is one of the best things you could do to interact with them, and also show that you're listening to your audience. When you show that either in audio format or the text version of that, it just shows that you're there listening to your audience.

They're more likely to pay attention to you and what you have to say, whatever your answers are, but also I put those at the end of those episodes because I saw Michael was doing that, and people loved them.

But what ended up happening was the questions were different from what that episode was about, so people would get to that part of the episode at the end and then they would either tune out or they would have preferred to have gotten to that part sooner because they enjoyed that question specifically. It just became too much, and the episodes were long already so I just stopped.

Mindy: It sounds like it didn't make sense from an editorial sense, right? It just didn't fit into the flow.

Pat: Right. I put too much into one episode and it just wasn't meant to be on Smart Passive Income, although people did enjoy it, but then I was just like, "It's not worth it. It's a lot of extra work." I use SpeakPipe.com to collect those voice mails, and you should too. They're great. Then it was like, "Okay, fine."

Then I sat down with John Lee Dumas, who also lives here in San Diego. We had a Starbucks together, and we get together every once in a while. We're also in a mastermind group together that meets in person once a month. He and I were talking about just what we had going on, and I was asking questions about his podcast, because he was doing 7 days a week for like a 45-minute length episode.

I was like, "John, how in the world are you able to do this?" and he's like, "Two reasons. First, batch processing."

Mindy: Amen.

Pat: Right? Amen to batch processing. That's something that I've just learned and has been so helpful, just kind of hacking your time and doing things in bunches. He does all of his interviews for his 7-day-a-week show on Monday. His whole Monday is scheduled out for all the interviews that happen weeks from that point.

Secondly, he had a team member helping him edit those and put those together. That 1-2 combo there was the big green light for me to be like, "Okay, maybe I can try this out, but what am I going to do? Should I outsource SPI?" and then I had the idea, "Maybe I could do a 5-day-a-week episode of these voice mail questions that come in and turn that into something."

Then we started brainstorming the name. It was either John or I or somebody who was like, "Dude, AskPat," and I'm like, "Yeah, that's it! Okay awesome, let's do this!" I started planning it out and I was like, "Oh man, I'm not going to be able to do this myself. I need that second piece of the puzzle. I need somebody to help me."

I think we were already working together at that time, Mindy, and what were your thoughts at that point when I kind of presented this to you, and you knew that you were going to be helping me with this?

Mindy: I'm trying to remember sort of where we were at that point in time. Let's see, that would have been about February of last year. At first too, just the whole thought of it, it sounded a little bit crazy. It sounded like sort of a really crazy idea, especially when we first started you were delivering the episode to me at night. You were doing one at a time. You weren't doing the batch processing at first.

When we first started I would sit down at like 9 or 10 at night Central time and watch as the episode popped up. You'd send me a note, then I would edit it and put it up that night. It was cumbersome at that point in time.

We had some parts of the work flow worked out. The first part that we really got into place, and I think we got a good system behind, was SpeakPipe. You got all these questions, and you had so many questions to go through that I started going through them in batches. I would listen to like 30 or 40 questions in a row and copy them into a spreadsheet, basically summarize the question, and then I would highlight the ones that I personally thought, "Hey, this is a good one."

That was kind of the first part of the work flow that we got down. Now Jessica, who also does your email, goes in maybe once every two weeks or so, and she just goes through hundreds of questions. She does a really quick summary of, "Here is the question." She basically just types what the question is that the people are asking.

That part of the work flow works really great, so every couple weeks you've got another several hundred questions to read through. You read through them and pick out, "These are the ones I want to answer," and then this is the part of the process I'm not entirely clear on. You sit down on Sunday night and you record a week's worth at a time. Tell me what it is you look for when you're looking through those questions.

Pat: Great question. This is going to help people get on AskPat actually, and get awarded a tshirt for having their question featured, which is another part of the process we'll talk about in a little bit.

I look for a number of things. First, is it a different sort of unique question. That's one thing, but I will also see if it's a question that has been asked several times before that I have yet to answer.

Typically, if the same question keeps popping up, which is an obvious validation that that's a question that's important to answer, I'll go back and type in certain keywords or try to figure out who was the first one to ask a similar type of question. Because we're awarding these questions out to people, I want to make sure it's as fair as possible. So those are sort of the first two things.

Also I listen to those questions and see if the audio quality is decent. They don't have to be great. They don't have to be from a professional mic. You've probably listened to episodes of AskPat before – obviously you have, Mindy – and some of the quality isn't all that good, but as long as you can still hear the person, that's important.

Mindy: That was some of the coolest feedback we got when we were in Ohio, because we held a little Meetup when we were in Columbus just doing a big planning session.

I very clearly remember somebody saying, "One of the things I really love about AskPat is the people who ask the questions, their microphones aren't perfect. I feel like I therefore can ask a question too, even though maybe I might stumble through my question or my microphone is pretty lousy. It's okay to ask a question."

That is something I've really learned to love about listening to those questions, is sometimes you can hear a coffee shop in the background, and that's really cool. I picture the person doing that, or you can hear their family talking in the background. That really makes the question to me feel more important, because this person is maybe asking a question about how to handle some back-end thing for their website, and you hear the family in the background. They're taking time away from their family to ask this question so it's important to get a good answer.

Pat: Right, or they're in the car and you hear the wind a little bit. We've had a few questions come in where you just can't hear the person.

Mindy: Yeah, there have been a few where we can't get anything out of it, but most of the time we can.

Pat: If I didn't get so many questions I would reply to those people and say, "Hey, can you try one more time or maybe try a different mechanism for doing that?" but there's so many questions that come in now. We're at a point where we're getting maybe a dozen questions a day, which is amazing. When you think about it, it's like the show is never going to run out of questions, and it's completely user-driven. If you have a fairly large audience, this is something you can achieve.

You don't necessarily have to collect voice mails. That is definitely a part of the process that makes it a little bit tougher because there's a sequence of events where somebody has to listen to them obviously. Having an assistant do that for me helps me so that I don't have to listen to them myself and maybe come across questions that have already been answered or aren't suited for the show and things like that.

I try to mix it up a little bit, too. I have questions about all different types of things, and if I notice the last couple weeks I touched a lot on email, I'll kind of try something else. I also mix it up between male and female, and international and local and those sorts of things, so I keep a lot in my mind in terms of what's going on.

Again, I make sure it's a question, as much as possible, that I haven't answered yet. That's kind of what I go for there.

Mindy: From an editorial direction, I've noticed too that you try to match the question to the sponsor if at all possible. This I think is a really important thing to keep in mind. If you are building out a podcast and you have sponsorships and you're taking questions, it's really great if there is a way.

It's not that you're tying it in because you're like, "Oo, we've got to make sure that Lynda.com feels like they're getting their money's worth so I mention, 'You should do this and that's the answer.'" That's not the point, but there's some editorial sense.

If you're asking a question about hiring, and ZipRecruiter is sponsoring your show this week, then put the question about hiring with the ZipRecruiter's episode because it makes sense.

Pat: Absolutely. So let's keep going with the work flow. I listen to the questions that seem interesting to me. I listen to them, and then what I do is I record the answer, but before I record the answer I copy and paste that question from our SpeakPipe tab – which is what you started and now Jessica does – into our AskPat 2015 editorial calendar.

I'll share a screen shot for those of you listening to this, if you eventually end up on a computer somewhere. If you go to the show notes at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session153 I'll show you a screen shot of what that looks like and the inner workings of that document, which of course Mindy put together very nicely and it works very, very well and it does all this magic in terms of Excel and dropdowns and pulling from other tabs. I don't even know how you do that.

But essentially I can put that question there and then there's another column that allows me to select "Has it been recorded yet? Has it been uploaded? Has it been shipped or published?" We don't have to get into the mechanics of Excel or Google Sheets, but I just love how you did that.

Mindy: It's called data validation, if anybody wants to look up how that works. You can build little dropdown boxes using data validation.

So you listen to the question, and do you sketch out notes beforehand or do you just "stream of consciousness" record it? Because you always seem to have a lot of tools and links ready to share.

Pat: As I'm listening, or immediately after I finish listening, I use my little Boogie Board Sync here, which is a little notepad that you can erase. It almost looks like the front of a Kindle. I don't even know how to describe it. I have a little stylus that writes on it and then I can erase it. That way I'm not wasting paper.

What I do is I write just anything that comes to mind. Oftentimes I'll do research just to make sure I hit some certain points, or if I have websites I need to be referencing I write those down on this little pad. I'll put a link to the pad in the show notes as well so you can see what I'm talking about. This thing is actually pretty cool. You can sync it to your phone and you can draw on it and see what's being drawn on your phone.

The only practical use I've found for that is to have Keoni draw on it and I pretend like I know what he's drawing, even though I see it on my phone. I pretend like we're doing magic or that I can read his mind. But you can also use it to project things onto a bigger screen like a television or your iMac. Then you can use this little pen to draw for people watching, like if you're doing a presentation or something.

So what I do is I grab the file from SpeakPipe, I listen to it, and I write down any sort of notes and things I want to cover, bullet points only. I used to not be as confident when I first started AskPat and I would write down a whole page of notes, just kind of everything in super detail on what I wanted to say. But now I just kind of believe in myself and I just put quick bullet points, knowing that I'll be able to fill in the gaps there.

From there, after I drop into the AskPat spreadsheet, I look to see who the sponsors are for that episode, because I book the sponsors ahead of time and I can see who those sponsors are. Then when I'm recording I know what the episode number is, which is in that spreadsheet as well, so I know to say, "Hey, what's up. Welcome to AskPat episode XYZ. Thank you for joining me today." I have a little spiel that I say that I didn't really plan for. It just kind of happened over time.

Then I say, "Before we get to today's question from…" and I say the name there, because I sort of copy that from that question as well, then I say, "I want to thank today's sponsor, which is …." and it's there on the screen. "Now let's get to today's question."

Then I go [click noise] – I make a little clicking noise so that when Mindy goes in there and edits, you see that on the waveform, right?

Mindy: I do. I know exactly where to cut. It's great. First of all I'm impressed that you can make that sound, because I've tried and I cannot.

Pat: [clicking sound] I'm an only child.

Mindy: Yeah, so let's talk about that a little bit. You upload the file into Dropbox when you're done recording. You upload the file into a shared Dropbox that we both use. Then I have a program called Hazel. I actually just started using this recently.

Pat: I've never even heard of that.

Mindy: I learned about it from [Mike Vardy](#) at [Productivityist.com](#). His podcast is Mikes on Mics. His newsletter is insanely useful. I absolutely love it, Productivityist. So I use this program called [Hazel](#), and when you post it into Dropbox, if I have my computer on, it automatically takes it out of the place you put it in Dropbox and it puts it into the folder that I want it to be in. I've just set it up to look for any files starting with Askpat. It just pulls that into this folder.

Pat: Which I know to name it when I export it.

Mindy: Exactly. You always name it the same way, so part of this is being super regular. You always name things in exactly the same way, and that makes it really easy for me to set up systems that automatically grab things. We do a lot of stuff in exactly the same way, and that makes it really easy to set up rules and to make things repeatable.

Pat: Right. It wasn't like that at first, though. We were all over the place at first. We never got into fights or anything like that....

Mindy: No, but it was like, "Dude, could you do it this way?" Like we'd start to figure it out and I would say, "It would be easier for me if you would do it this way," and you would say to me, "It would be easier for me if you would do it this way."

Pat: Or "It's easier for me if I do it this way."

Mindy: Exactly, or I'll ask you for something and you'll be like, "Eh, that doesn't really make sense." Like initially I would edit the show every night and I would post it at night, but if you were running behind then I would sometimes be editing the show super late at night, and we had to learn this.

Also my mother has terrible internet and I go home once a week to my mom's house Wednesday nights, so I would be up till like 2 in the morning trying to get the stinking file to upload, just because her internet's so slow.

So we realized, "You know what, batching makes more sense. If you give me everything on Sunday night, then I can edit all of them at once." It turns out that it's faster for me if I edit five episodes at once. While I'm listening to Monday's episode I can be doing some work on Tuesday's file.

Like you said, you make those little clicking noises and I can tell without even listening to it, that's where I need to go and cut out the audio and slide in the question. I can queue all of that up without even actually listening to it, so we've built in these different things.

So you upload your response, I download your audio, and once a week the first thing I do is I open up a text document. This is a text document I have that just syncs to my Dropbox so that I can access it from my phone if I need to. The first thing I do is go in and copy down "Episode 249," then next to it I write down the SpeakPipe question number, so 12530250, then question number 1187 or whatever it is. I go in and make that list.

I go into SpeakPipe and I download the five questions for the week, then go to a program called Auphonic. This is an optional step, but I know you're a big fan of Auphonic. I go in and I upload all five questions and I have Auphonic process them, basically.

What it does is it brings them all to a specific soundness level, and it can strip out some background noise if necessary. I still do a lot of that in Reaper, but it's a quick step that does some of the work for me so I don't have to.

Then I open up my sound editor. I use Reaper. It's a little more advanced than Audacity, which is free, but it's not as insanely complicated as Adobe Audition. I just don't speak Adobe somehow. I just have not learned how to speak Adobe. I tried to use Audition but it was just a little too complicated.

Lynda.com has a really great video on how to use Reaper, and I watched that first and said, "I think this is the right program for me." For spoken word editing you don't need quite everything that Adobe Audition has to offer. Reaper was $60 and I can do a lot of audio processing. It just is a program that makes sense to me, so I'm a big fan of Reaper and I'm a big fan of Garrick Chow's kind of "How to use Reaper" lesson in Lynda.com.

So I open up the file and drop in the audio. I see immediately, "Okay, here's where Pat's gap is between his introduction and then answering the question," and cut that out. I stick in your audio, listen to the caller's audio, and very frequently I'll do a little cleaning up of the background sound.

There's a great plugin in Reaper called Reafir, and it makes it very easy to cut out just a little bit of background noise, or I'll use the ReaEQ, and it's just to do some raising and lowering some of the sound across the waveform. Then I cut it out.

While I listen to you give your answer, I'm taking notes in my little text document. I'm writing the show notes at that stage, and that is again something that's a bit systematized. I use [TextExpander](#), which lets you type a short string, like I will type *aplynda* and it will expand to two sentences about, "Today's sponsor is Lynda.com. Go to Lynda…" and that sort of thing.

Pat: That's super cool. I didn't even know you did that.

Mindy: Yeah, it works really great. I type in *apquestion* and it says, "Do you have a question about…" and I type in "email marketing?" Then I type *aprecord* and it will say, "Go to AskPat.com to record your question" or whatever. I use a lot of text expanders and that helps a lot.

Much in the same way that you already have a system in which to record, where you always say, "But before we get to that I want to thank today's sponsor from…" you say the same thing. In the show notes I type the same thing every day, which is like "Today's question comes from Sarah, who…" and I stop and listen to the question and I try to encapsulate whatever Sarah asks as the question. Then I type that. That question essentially becomes the episode title.

You don't give me an episode title. I just take it from the question and sort of think, "If I was somebody searching for an answer to this question, what would I ask?" and I try to make that the episode title.

Pat: Key lessons here – batch processing is extremely helpful, probably more than anything really in terms of productivity and getting things done ahead of time. Notice the things that you continually do over and over and over, even if it's little snippets of text, like you were talking about.

It's learning how to automate those things either using tools or different pieces of software, and that can save a lot of time. This is five episodes a week, so I'm imagining how much time you've saved by shaving 5 seconds in every episode. These little things completely add up.

For everybody out there who is either looking for somebody to help them do this – and it's not even just about podcasting, it's about writing blog posts or it's about doing videos – you can use this sort of idea of batch processing repetitive things, and tools and software to help you do these things you do over and over again anyway. You can use this advice to help you save time.

Mindy: I know where you're going with this. One of the things I would ask somebody if you're bringing somebody on, ask them about the tools they use. Ask them, "Do you use any tools to save time?" You're just looking for somebody who's thought about their work flow and found a way to make it more uniform.

I think that's really helpful because if it's faster for me, it's cheaper for you. It's just a very honest way to approach this. You want me to be efficient with my time because when I'm efficient with my time there's a direct benefit to you in that. You want somebody who thinks about that and appreciates efficiency.

I would ask them, "Tell me about some of the tools you use," and also I would ask whoever you're interviewing to give an example of a problem they've encountered with a process, and what they've done to figure that out. An example for me is a problem we have encountered with our process is that Sound Cloud doesn't let you schedule podcasts at this point in time, so I have to post this podcast….

Pat: Well, they do but….

Mindy: They haven't figured it out, and this is the only thing Sound Cloud is missing in my opinion. It's the only feature they're missing. You can currently schedule things to go live at a certain date. The only problem is it retains the date that you uploaded it.

So if I were to go in on Monday and upload all five of our podcasts all at once, I can schedule it to go public on Tuesday, go public on Wednesday, and go public on Thursday. But unfortunately they would all still look they were published on Monday, which is okay but we would like it to look like it's published on Monday, published on Tuesday, and so on.

Right now for us I go in every morning and I upload the podcast. That's not a big deal, but what I've done to make that a lot simpler is I have my little text file where I can just quickly copy and paste my show notes.

When I first started, I'll be honest, it didn't occur to me, "I could take notes while I'm editing," so I would edit your show and assemble it, but then when I would go and upload it I would listen to it to quickly write the show notes.

Maybe like a month in I went, "Why don't I just take notes while I'm editing it. That way I only have to listen to it once instead of listening to it twice." It seems silly but it just didn't occur to me, but I was like, "There's got to be a way to make this faster," because it's better for me if it's faster too, because I can move on to my other tasks.

It's just finding little ways to make your work flow a little bit faster. I very firmly believe that we fill our time with the work that we have in front of us. I can do more work if I have more work, if that makes sense. Like if I have 3 hours of work and I have 6 hours to do it in – I don't mean this from like a billable thing, but I just know me. I'll take a break and I'll go drink some water and I'll go pet my cats and then I'll come back. But if I have 7 hours of work and I have 6 hours to do it, I will get my 7 hours of work done in 6 hours.

I believe in making my time more efficient because then I can take on more work and I can fill that with more interesting things. I like to make myself efficient so that I can take on more projects.

Pat: Right, and even if you're not going to be hiring somebody, this is stuff that you should obviously be learning for yourself, too. This is something I've been doing on my end for things only I can do, like recording these podcast episodes or even down to how to structure my files and things like that.

I think the best thing anybody could do for something that they know they do over and over again in terms of sort of the macro level, like I write blog posts every week, is write down every step that you do to make that happen, and then and there you'll be able to see where there might be things you can take out or things that are repetitive that you don't need to do, or things that you can consolidate, or people or tools that can do those things. That's one of the best things you could do because you might not even know.

We've talked with Chris Ducker obviously, and he has his book *Virtual Freedom,* and he has this amazing life-changing exercise called the "3 lists of freedom," where you write down the things that you're not good at, things that you hate doing, but also things that you shouldn't be doing. Oftentimes we don't even know what we could hand off or let other people do or use tools for.

Mindy: Absolutely. I'm a big fan of Chris's. I've read all of that and I absolutely 100% agree with that. One of the things that I think is super-useful, and this is true for yourself and this is especially true if you're going to hand work off to other people, is checklists. Checklists are absolutely invaluable.

I think checklists get a really bad rap because people think, "Oh, my work is more complicated than that." The checklist is a beautiful tool because it frees up your mind to think about other things. The checklist is there to make sure that you don't forget the simple things you already know how to do.

For the SPI podcast posts, I'm part of that work flow now where we edit your podcast and another member of the team builds the podcast post. I come in at the end and I have a checklist, and all I do is I go down the checklist and it's just quality control. I'm making sure that we didn't miss anything.

I've built a checklist for the AskPat work flow. Even though I do it every day, I want to make sure that I don't miss a simple thing. Like when I upload it into Sound Cloud, the very first tag has to be business because that's how Sound Cloud knows it's the podcast category.

I know that, but if I ever decide I'm going to take a 2-week vacation and I need somebody else to upload it for the week or I'm like, "Pat, I need you to post this episode because I'm going to be on an airplane," I can just quickly hand you that checklist and you will have no confusion about what to do.

Pat: Totally. What is that tool? You shared a tool with me about that.

Mindy: Yes, it's TickTick.com. It's a super lightweight web app. I looked all over to try to find a good tool for this, and they are really my favorite. It's very simplistic and it's for building checklists. On the app version of it you can even set it to give you a notification with that checklist every day.

When I first started using it, every morning at 9 am my phone would alert me with that checklist telling me, "It's time to post AskPat. Here's your checklist." You don't have to use the notification feature, but that's where I build all my checklists.

Pat: You can use this as a to-do list, in terms of a daily to-do list thing if you wanted to do that, or a task to-do list, right?

Mindy: Yeah. I don't really use it for a daily to-do list. I use it as the task to-do list. I use it for all of the things I do over and over and over, because I can just go through, I see my lists and I check them off. Then the next time I need to go to that thing I just uncheck all of the boxes and then I just re-check all of the boxes.

Pat: That's cool. I think people are going to enjoy that. It's TickTick.com.

Mindy: So after we get it processed, we get it up into Sound Cloud, I use my little text document because then I just copy and paste the show notes into Sound Cloud and hit Post. If I was to do a single episode from start to finish, it comes in at about 27 minutes.

It depends on how long the episode is, but it's just under 30 minutes start to finish. I take your episode, get it processed, get it tagged, and get it up into Sound Cloud, and then post to you in Slack. Bam, the episode is done.

Pat: 27 minutes, so about a half-hour of work. That's great to know. I will say that in my 2014 annual report I calculated how much time I put into AskPat. I'm sort of in the groove now and I spend an average of one hour each Sunday evening to publish an entire week's worth of episodes. You consider each episode about 10-15 minutes long, plus a little bit of transition time. I can get 4 episodes in an hour, which is awesome. That's 4 hours per month for 30 days of content, minus the weekends.

To put this in true perspective – and I mentioned this in the annual report – for all of 2014 starting in February, I put in a total personally of about 44 hours of work to record all of the episodes for AskPat. That's just one full work week to record all the episodes for AskPat, thanks to Mindy and her help, and that has equated to over $45,000 in sponsorships, which is pretty amazing.

Mindy: That's pretty mind-boggling. The key to it I think is it's a truly useful thing. I frequently will listen to the episodes as I'm editing and I will send a little note to Matt telling him, "You've got to listen to Wednesday's episode." Or I know I very much have

learned things and picked up new tools as a result of listening to the episode. I think that the content is really, really useful.

What's so great is for the average listener maybe Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are useful, but maybe Tuesday and Thursday just weren't something that was useful to you. That's totally fine because you know that in the long run most of the questions are going to be useful to you.

You and I were talking right before this chat just about podcasts in general. One of the things that I think is very important – because I listen to a lot of podcasts for you and I listen to podcasts that I edit for other clients – I just want everyone to really think about the function of your podcast.

Some people are going to hear this episode and they're going to hear you say, "I got this much revenue from this much work," so they're going to think, "I'm going to start a podcast so that I can get that podcast revenue," and that's absolutely the wrong way to look at it. The right way to look at it is, "What's the thing that I'm creating so that it's useful?"

Maybe it's not that it's going to be useful to my listener and therefore I'll be able to advertise, but maybe you have a small business and you're looking for a way to build up your clientele. So make a podcast that's for your ideal client, and it will give you a reason to go out and interview a whole bunch of your ideal clients.

Through those chats maybe you will interview 5 people for your podcast, and one of those people will turn into a client. That was worth the other 4 interviews right there. I think that's a very good use of a podcast as well.

Pat: I absolutely agree. Thank you for mentioning that. I don't want people to think that if you record a 5-day-a-week show that that's immediately going to happen, but it can. The cool thing is, podcasting is getting more popular. More and more people are listening to it now, so I really do think we're at the beginning of podcasts right now and there's a lot of opportunity out there.

Obviously if you want to get started with one, I've helped thousands of people. If you go to PodcastingTutorial.com, that's my free tutorial on how you can get started with your own podcast. You can check that out, and that will give you an opportunity to do it yourself. Then maybe down the road you can find somebody else to help you like Mindy

has helped me, and use that information I share with you there. Again that's PodcastingTutorial.com.

Mindy, thanks again for coming on today and sharing a little bit of your time and opening up the kimono a little bit in terms of how AskPat is put together. I think it's going to be really inspiring. There's a lot of gold nuggets in this episode, I feel, from a lot of the tools you mentioned to just some of the processes that we should all be using, because we can't get that time back once we use it up. That's for sure.

Mindy: Isn't that the truth. We'll make sure that all of the tools are listed in the show notes.

Pat: Absolutely. Thanks Mindy, I appreciate it, and I'm sure we'll hear more from you in the future here on SPI.

Mindy: Wonderful.

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I hope you enjoyed that interview with Mindy, my wonderful wonderful assistant producer. She's so wonderful in so many ways, and obviously you heard it just now. Thank you so much for listening in.

Also, if you want to go check out the show notes and links to all the golden nuggets and resources Mindy mentioned, head on over to SmartPassiveIncome.com/session153.

Thank you again for listening in today, and I also want to thank today's sponsors. We have first Audiobooks.com. I read a lot of books, but I mostly listen to them, and I listen them to Audiobooks.com, which is really cool. They were the first sponsor for the Smart Passive Income podcast and I love them to death.

They've done a lot of cool things to help out you, the listeners. If you go to Audiobooks.com/spi you can actually get a couple things for free. You can get the audio version of my book, *Let Go,* for free. They just threw that in there and I was happy to work with them on that. Also you will get one free download for your first audiobook, so the first audiobook you get through them is on them, and you can enjoy a new book every month thereafter.

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Thank you again for checking out this episode. Again you can get the show notes, links, and resources at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session153.

And look out for next week's episode next Wednesday, where we're going to be talking with another person who's helped me out recently, Caleb Wojcik, who was also a previous guest on the show. This time we're going to be talking about the production of SPI-TV, my recent foray back into videos. That's my web TV show, SPI-TV. You can check it out at WatchSPI.tv.

We're going to talk all about the production of that – gear and production tips you can use to start your own video show – but also the results of putting this show not just on YouTube, but on iTunes as a video podcast. The numbers are actually pretty incredible, and there are so many open opportunities there in the video podcasting market.

So look out for that in Episode 154 next week. Thanks so much, take care, and I'll see you in the next episode of SPI. Peace.

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

Links and Resources Mentioned in This Episode:

Episode 138 – Meet Team Flynn
Episode 149 – Dane Maxwell Interviews Pat Flynn

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