**SPI Podcast Session #184–
Psychological Strategies to Get More People to
Open Your Emails, Read Your Copy and Click on Links
With Derek Halpern**

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This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session #184. Warning: Derek Halpern's on the show. Get ready to be blown away!

Intro: Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast, where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now your host – his dream is to start a conference called FlynnCon (I'll go) – Pat Flynn.

Pat: Hey, what's up everybody? Pat Flynn here and thank you for joining me in Session 184 of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Exactly 100 episodes ago in Episode 84 we had the same guest on the show, coincidentally. This wasn't done on purpose but it's kind of cool because Derek was on the show back then to talk about "The 3 Secrets of Successful Selling and How to Turn Browsers Into Buyers, with Derek Halpern."

Something really cool came out of that episode. He created this thing called the bonus sandwich, which I've talked about a few times on the blog and on my email lists, and it's done really, really well for people.

He always brings his A game to these interviews. He always approaches them and asks me beforehand, "What can I do to best serve your audience?" and that's what I love about Derek and that's why he's so successful. He does it in a way that's very unique.

He's actually done a lot to serve me and help SPI out. Back in the day, even before that podcast episode, he helped me with increasing my conversion rates on different pages on my website as well, so he's definitely a guy you should pay attention to, especially when it comes to the psychology of why people do things, and that's exactly what we're talking about today.

We're going to be talking about psychological strategies to get more people to open your emails, to read your copy and click on the links that you place in those emails. This of course applies to sales copy and any calls to action that you have anywhere on your website or in your brand, so this is really, really important.

We're going to be talking about how do we just get people to take action on whatever it is that we're wanting them to take action on? We spend so much time, effort, money, sweat and stress to work on things to try and get change from our audience, to try and have them do things, and how do we make sure we get them to do those things?

We're going to talk about those things with Derek, so here we go. This is Derek Halpern from SocialTriggers.com and also Zippy Courses, as you'll hear as well.

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Pat: What's up everybody? I'm so happy to welcome back Derek Halpern from SocialTriggers.com to the podcast. What's up, Derek? How are you, man?

Derek: Dude, what's up? Thank you for having me. I'm pumped to be here.

Pat: I'm so happy you're here because you're a fan favorite here on SPI. It might seem funny to those of you who don't know, but Derek and I have a great relationship. We're really great friends and we talk on Skype all the time.

When you consider the kind of person that Derek is and his kind of aggressive attitude, which is awesome, and then me kind of this laid-back guy, you wouldn't think that we would become best friends, but we've gotten to know each other really well and I fully support everything Derek does, and I know he supports everything that happens here on SPI as well. Again, I value our friendship, Derek, and I'm so happy that you're here.

Derek: Dude, I'm pumped to be here. I mean I've always told you that you're one of the people that I truly admire in this space, for one main reason. I feel like I work a lot and I produce a lot, but you somehow manage to do a lot more than me. I don't know how you do that because you have two kids.

Pat: The kids make you work a lot harder and smarter, actually. I've gotten very good with fine-tuning my workflow, my strategies for productivity and that sort of stuff. I don't have time to waste time because the kids are going to grow up whether or not I pay attention to them.

Derek: Makes sense.

Pat: We're going to talk about a lot of stuff today, in particular strategies to help everybody out there listening and watching live on Periscope right now. We're actually

doing this on Periscope. There's 350 people watching and listening to us live now, which is cool, but we're going to be talking about how to get more people to open your emails, to read your copy – and I guess we could also include opening your blog posts and Twitter links and all those sorts of things; those kind of go around the same lines – and click on the links.

This is going to be a great episode, but before we get into all that stuff, Derek, a lot has happened over the past year or year and a half with you. You have some amazing products that have come out recently. You've kind of stepped away from speaking on stage, which you were doing a lot before. What's been the shift in your mind and where are you at now? What have you been up to?

Derek: Here's the bottom line. In 2014 I made a conscious decision to quit speaking, to quit meeting new people, and to quit adding additional distractions in my life because at that point I realized I knew what I needed to do. I knew I needed to create more products, and I knew I wasn't going to be able to do that if I was speaking at a conference two or three times a month, because you need to have that space to focus on the product development.

In 2014 I went from a 1-product company to a 4-product company. Now we've got 4 successful products that we sell at Social Triggers, and I wouldn't have been able to pull that off if it wasn't for the focus on product development.

Then in 2015 something else happened. Now that we've got 4 products and we've got sizeable revenues, I knew that if I wanted to take this company to the next level, I knew again I couldn't speak that much, even though I did I think 3 total speaking engagements this year, and what I had to focus on was hiring people. I knew I was going to hit a plateau in my business unless I hired employees – not contractors or outsourcers or whatever, but actual employees. And this year alone, the team at Social Triggers has grown to almost 14 people now.

Pat: Wow, I didn't even realize it was that big.

Derek: Most people don't realize. Most people look at my site and they're just seeing the same videos they've always seen, but they don't realize what's going on behind the scenes and all the stuff that we're building for in the future.

One of our products is Zippy Courses, and I know you're an affiliate of it so thank you for that.

Pat: Yeah, it's great. I've used it. It's fantastic.

Derek: Just on that, we've had 3 or 4 people working on that. We've got the developer, we had support people, we've pulled in some writers here and there to help with the process or what not, and that's just working on a software product.

Then we've got the other flagship products that we're releasing, and other products that are still in development that we haven't talked about yet, but that's kind of the focus. This year the focus is building the team. Last year was building the products.

Next year, once I build the team, that's probably when I'm going to start doing interviews like these again. I think I did one interview or a podcast like this – I think this is probably only the second one I've done in probably 15 months. I don't even do them anymore.

Pat: Well, thank you. I feel special.

Derek: Well, you're welcome!

Pat: Dude, you're growing massively here. What is the big vision down the road? You obviously wouldn't be doing this and growing your team and coming out with all these products if you didn't have a plan. I know you, Derek, so what is kind of the big thing we can all look forward here down the road?

Derek: There's two things that I've realized in my life. Thing #1 is I get really fired up when people don't reach their full potential. I wrote a blog post about this called "2015: Be the Exception." This was all about people who were complaining about the economy or complaining about all these bad things going on in their life.

The whole message was that maybe 1 out of 17 people make more than $100,000 per year. That's the stat, and people are like, "Oh man, that stinks!" Or you could be like, "Wait a second. 1 out of 17 people can do it. Why don't you be that 1 out of 17? Be the exception."

That's when I realized that really fires me up, and I want to really entice people to be the exception in their life. I want to create tools, both software products and training products, that can help people do just that.

While I've mainly focused on business for the last few years, we're going to be branching out into other aspects of life. One of the things is going to be about social

skills like how to actually be a people person, and how being a people person can help you build your business but it could also help you live a happy life. So that's one of the examples. We're going to be branching out into that.

We're also going to be continuously working and looking for new software products. We've got one software product, Zippy Courses. That's doing super well and we're looking at pursuing other software projects.

I guess what people should really expect from me is more of the same, but just in different verticals.

Pat: Awesome. What's been the biggest challenge for you in terms of growing, because I'm doing the same thing. I'm building my team. I'm expanding out beyond my comfort zone even, and I'm curious what have been the challenges that you've faced, so maybe I can look ahead.

Derek: Dude, the biggest problem that I faced honestly this year was dealing with the fact that I run a company of remote employees. All my employees work from their home office, and the biggest problem has been compliance-related issues that come along with having remote employees.

I got sucked down the rabbit hole and worked on something like that for like two months this year, and in hindsight there were people I could have hired to handle it but I was kind of like in the thick of it. I didn't know who to hire or what to hire so I didn't know where to go, and that was like the biggest headache for me.

Now that I'm out of it, though, it's cured. The problem is gone, but that was probably the biggest misery of 2015 for me.

Pat: Are you allowed to tell us kind of what that was about?

Derek: Long story short, there's a lot of businesses out there who hire contractors, and they get away with hiring contractors, but if you're telling people to work certain times of the day – you should always talk to a lawyer to see what's legal or not; I'm not a lawyer – but if you tell people what times they should work or you dictate how they should work or something along those lines, and you're having them work 40 hours a week and you're their only client as a contractor, that's kind of illegal actually, is what I was told. Again, confirm with your lawyer.

So I wanted to make everyone employees, and I didn't want to hire only people in New York. I wanted to be able to hire people based on how good they were, not based on where they lived.

It turns out that every single state has different laws that govern what makes an employee and what doesn't make an employee, and what rights do these employees have and what rights don't they have. All these different state-by-state things were a huge headache for me, and after two months of struggling I finally realized that there are companies you can hire to handle this and we did that.

Pat: Thank you for being honest with that. I appreciate that. Everybody watching on Periscope appreciates that too.

Let's shift over to stuff that people can take home with them, not that what you've already said isn't important, but this is huge. We spend a lot of time writing blog posts, writing emails, and trying to get people to take action on our stuff. I mean we wouldn't do what we do unless we wanted people to actually read and take action and all that sort of stuff. But most people aren't so good at actually getting the output from the input that they put in. How do we get our audience and people to actually pay attention to us and also take action on our stuff?

Derek: There's a technique that we're going to be talking about today called the POD technique. Before I share that POD technique which helps people open emails, click links, and buy stuff, before we talk about that, one of the most important things you have to understand is something that people might roll their eyes at when I say it.

The reason why I say this is because this is like the unsexy part about marketing, but you really need to know who your ideal customer is. I know this is something that people have said before so it's not new information, but it's something that I know people ignore.

Here's why they ignore it. I always said, "You want to know who your ideal customer is," and what do people do? They sit down, they take out a piece of paper, and they start imagining who their ideal customer is.

Pat: Right, their avatar.

Derek: Their avatar, yes. That's a good exercise. If you're doing that, you're doing more than what most people do. However, I never liked to imagine who my ideal customer was. I always liked to talk to real people. Instead of imagining who they are,

I'd rather do 20 1-on-1 interviews with people who I think might fit the bill, but I want to dig a little bit deeper to understand what's going on in their life. So the first step is to know your ideal customer.

The second step after that is to know that you have an ideal customer, but there is no such thing as one ideal customer. Instead, there are several ideal customers, with an s. Let's just use Zippy Courses as an example. Zippy Courses is a software product that helps people create and sell online courses.

One ideal customer for Zippy Courses would be people who want to start an online business. They want to start selling online courses, and Zippy Courses can help them start an online business by selling online courses. That's one customer.

Another customer might be people who want to turn their service into a product so they can free up their time to spend building their business, as opposed to working with people 1-on-1. That's a different type of ideal customer. Someone who hasn't even started making money yet needs to be talked to differently than someone who already makes money selling services online. Makes sense.

So before you write one word of email copy, before you write one email, before you do any of that stuff, you really need to go down the list of who your ideal customers are and then make a habit of talking to 5 or 6 of each type of customer to really understand what's going on in their life.

Let's get a little bit more specific. When you're talking with these people and you're trying to understand who your ideal customer is, what are you looking for? That's the big question. When you talk to these people, what should you look out for?

Pat: First of all, how are you talking to them? How are you finding them? Are you just kind of Skyping them? Phone call? Coffee?

Derek: You can find them in a multitude of ways. You can look in blog comment sections. You can look in Facebook groups. You can look in your blog comment section. You could ask people to reply to emails that you send out if you have an email list already.

If you don't have an email list already I would go to places like Amazon.com. Go look at the book reviews of popular books in your industry and go read what people are saying about that book, like what's really great about the book, what's not so great about the book, and look for specific things that I'm going to show in just a second.

You can look that way, but then what you also want to do is try to get people on the phone or Skype 1-on-1 and talk to them for 45 minutes. This is something that people don't do, but we're doing research for a new product that we haven't even announced yet, and right now I think we've done 17 1-on-1 interviews with potential prospects, 17 of them, to try to understand who they are.

Now, like I said, how do you do it? If you don't have an email list yet, Facebook groups or blog comment sections. You can reach out to people on Twitter. Reach out to people 1-on-1 via email. You could go to someplace like Quora.com and see who's asking questions about what you plan on creating and reach out to those people 1-on-1. You could do that sort of stuff. That's how you find them.

Pat: Awesome. Thank you.

Derek: Now when you find them, what do you want to find out from them? This is where the POD technique comes into play. Once you know who your potential ideal customers are and you're talking to them, you want to find 3 things:

P — Problem

Thing #1 is the problem that this person has in their life right now that they want solved. I always say you want to start with the problem because if people have a problem in their life right now they're going to want to cure that problem.

If you don't start with the problem, you might fall for the trap where you create something that you think people should want, but they don't want yet because there's no pressing problem in their life to solve it, you know what I mean?

Pat: That's a lot of businesses.

Derek: That's so many businesses. Actually there was an article that I read recently about why start-ups fail, and it was something like 70% of these start-ups failed because they created a product that they thought people should want, but they had no reason to buy.

Pat: And if they only had 1 or 2 conversations they would be quick to realize that maybe that's not the thing they should have created, right?

Derek: Maybe 5 conversations, but yeah, if you have those conversations and look for the problems in their life first, you would easily find out that what you're planning on creating is not going to be a hit.

Pat: I think people are scared, though. It's like they don't want to hear that their idea maybe isn't one that is going to work.

Derek: Look, if you want someone to talk about that sort of thing, I'm not the person for you. I can't help you get unscared. I can help you sell some stuff, though. It's like if you're already at this point where you know you want to make a bunch of money and you're ready to listen to someone who's already done it and built a multiple 7-figure business, start with the problem when you're talking to these people.

Pat: So start with the problem, that's the #1 thing to find out when you're having these conversations. That's the P in POD.

Derek: Yes. That's the P in POD.

Now, the third thing – I know I'm skipping #2, but we're going from 1 to 3 – the third thing you want to find out, which is actually the 2nd thing you find out, but it doesn't spell a nice word when you go PDO, so the third thing you want to find out is the desire that person has.

D – Desire

Again, start with the problem in their life. Now you want to talk to them and find out the desire they have, like this is the problem in their life, and what would their life look like in an ideal world? That's the desire.

Pat: When you said desire, my initial thinking is it's just the solution to the problem, but you're thinking deeper than that, kind of 4 or 5 levels deeper than just the problem itself.

Derek: Yes. Let me give you an example. Problem: I want to start an online business. Desire: I want to sell online courses. No, that's not the desire. That's like a function of the desire. The problem could be "I want to start an online business." The desire is, "I want to make $1,000 dollars a month." You want to talk about the end result that people have.

Pat: Could it go even further? For example, "I need to make $1,000 a month because…" and kind of getting into their personal life at that point.

Derek: Yes, you can get a lot more specific. The more specific you are, the more targeted your audience is going to be, and that's okay. I guess if you want to talk about this from the point of copy, starting an online course would be considered a feature and making money would be considered a benefit.

So you want to focus on the desire. The desire isn't to solve the problem, the desire is what happens if that problem doesn't exist? What does their life look like? How great is their life? How miserable is their life? Maybe it's more miserable, I don't know, but you want to start with the problem and the third thing you want to get is the desire that they have.

Then, here's where the fun comes into play. Once you know the problem and you know the desire, now you need to catalog the obstacles standing between the problem and the desire.

O - Obstacles

These could be all sorts of obstacles. There could be mindset stuff. There could be like, "I'm scared to do this." That's one obstacle. Another obstacle might be, "I don't have the money to fix this problem." Another obstacle might be, "I don't have the time to fix this problem." You want to go through these lists of obstacles.

When you're talking to your ideal customers you want to find the problem, you want to find the desire, and you want to try to get an exhaustive list of all the different types of obstacles that your potential customers are going to encounter while they're trying to cure their problem and end up in this desire.

It's very simple to think about, and I know that we haven't even gotten started with how this actually translates into email copy yet, but you have to know this before you write one word of copy. If you look at all the best sales people, best copywriters, and best people in the world that do this stuff, the one thing that they all have in common is that they know the customer better than they know themselves.

You can't know the customer better than you know yourself unless you do this. You have to use the POD technique to understand who you're talking to. Do you want me to elaborate on this or do you want to go to the next step on how this translates to copy? What do you think?

Pat: My worry is that people will have these conversations and they might just kind of start listing questions. "This is my second question, this is my third question," but I know through experience that that's not the way to do that. Do you have any – I guess you could call them power questions that you could ask somebody to really get to the core of what their obstacles are and their desires are?

Derek: Great question. Here's the question you should never ask. Never ask people, "What do you want to buy?" or "How much do you want to pay for this?" Never ask those questions. The goal when you're asking questions is to ask open-ended questions that dig into people's inner feelings.

Let me give you an example. These calls that you're going to do have the opportunity to be quite revealing for people, so you always want to start the call off by trying to build some rapport. You want to make people like you.

When you're trying to build this rapport, one of the things you should know – and this comes from the book _Click: The Magic of Instant Connections_ written by Ori Brafman – one of the things you should know when you're talking to people is vulnerability begets vulnerability. So if you want people to get vulnerable, be sure you kick off these calls by telling a revealing story about yourself.

Don't just do it for the sake of manipulating people. Don't do that. The goal is to tell a story that you think is going to be either inspirational or something along those lines. It's usually a personal story about yourself that is going to make people feel at ease with opening up to you.

The other thing you want to do when you're building rapport is to assure them that you won't quote them or reveal their identity in any of this stuff. However, you should also let them know that you're doing this to do some product research, tell them what you're doing, how you're using it, etc. But be sure you can reassert their ability to remain anonymous. That way people can feel at ease with sharing some stuff with you.

Pat: I love that. Usually when I get on an interview with somebody who I haven't really talked to before, I do some things. For example, I just say "Hey, you know what? Let's just pretend that we're at a coffee shop. I'm getting to know you, you're getting to know me. Do you have any questions for me? Please let me know. This isn't recorded live. I'm not sharing this with anybody right now, and only with your permission will this be posted out live," and just trying to make people feel really comfortable.

Sometimes I've gotten to the point where I can tell somebody's a little bit hesitant to open up a little bit, and then like you said I kind of make fun of myself a little bit too. I talk about certain moments when I was on stage and kind of wanted to just run off, and thought people would throw tomatoes at me, just to kind of show people that I've been nervous too, and I got through it and it's okay.

Usually after that people laugh, and if you can get somebody to laugh that's a good sign. That doesn't mean you just want to crack jokes all day, but just paying attention to how a person is responding is very key so that you can understand where to take them from there.

Maybe it's not the right time to ask those deep questions yet. You'll get into that if you can. It's hard to describe. You just have to put yourself in that situation, and through experience this will become much easier.

Derek: Exactly, so you want to start with the rapport part. After the rapport part, the next thing when you get into the questions you want to ask open-ended questions. For example, "What's a problem that you're currently experiencing in your life right now?" something completely general.

If you get more specific like, "What's a problem that you're currently experiencing with your business right now?" – kind of like you asked me, a nice general question to see what people are going to list off – that's when you kind of want to listen to what they're saying.

If you have an idea for a product, say it's a productivity product, you want to sell a productivity product and you ask an open-ended question like, "What's a problem that you're currently facing in your business right now?" and they respond with, "Actually, I feel like I just don't have enough time to do all the things that I want to do," boom. Now you've got an opening to ask productivity questions.

It's like I'm purposely not giving people the exact questions they should ask because I'd rather teach people to understand how to think about asking questions. That way when you start having these conversations, if you get thrown a curve ball you don't start stuttering your way into a closet.

So you want to start with rapport, and then you want to ask open-ended questions that relate specifically to problems, like "What kind of problem are you facing in your business right now?" or "Have you ever tried to do something like this? What was your

experience?" or "Have you ever had any experience with trying to get more productive? What happened?" You want to kind of ask those open-ended questions.

Pat: Those last portions of those questions are very important. "What happened? How come? Why? How did you feel?"

Derek: Yes, "How did you feel?" That's the thing. When you ask open-ended questions, after they respond to you, you want to listen for a few things. You want to listen for what did they do and how did it fail? This is like the tactical stuff. Actually listen to what they did and why did it fail, or at least why do they think it failed. Then you want to ask how did that make them feel?

Everybody knows that nobody buys on logic, they buy on emotion and justify their emotions with logic later, so you want to make sure you ask people how they feel about the fact that they failed, because you want to get into their mind and understand that.

Then after the interview is over, one of the things you want to do – when you see why they say they failed and how do they feel – you want to actually reality-test that stuff and think, "All right, is this really why they failed, or is this why they think they failed, but is it really just an excuse?" You want to think that stuff through.

What's the quote from House where he's like, "Everybody lies. They don't necessarily think they're lying, but everybody does lie anyway." So you want to ask them why they think they failed and how did it make them feel. Those are the things that you want to listen for, and that should give you an accurate description of the problem that people have in their life.

Pat: Awesome. So how does this apply to what it is that we do? I mean it's obviously important to know this stuff, but then how do we translate this information into emails, into copy, into clicks and sales?

Derek: That's why we're here, dude. Let's get into it. Once you use the POD technique – the Problem, the Obstacles, the Desire – once you know these three things, you now know the exact words people use to describe issues in their life. So how does this apply to copy?

All the best copywriters will agree that if you want to convince people to open emails, click links, and buy things, you have to talk to them using their language. If you go through this POD technique you're already going to know their language, so when you're writing copy you're going to write from the top of your head. You're going to

write out your ideas, but then after you write your ideas you're going to see how you can tweak those ideas or copy to relate to the exact words they use.

Now when you translate this to email copy, as an example, let's say you're in the middle of a product launch, you've launched this product and you say, "Hey, I just released this new course." That's email #1.

If you know that the main reason why your customers are not buying this product is because they feel like they don't have the time, what's email #2? "Feel like you don't have the time for this?" If you release your product and you know the #1 reason why people don't buy is because they say they don't have enough time, what if the second email was "How to do this in 15 minutes." Now you've basically just answered the objection that people have to buying your product.

And the best part is, if they're feeling like they don't have the time, because you did the research and you know they're not having the time and they see an email subject line that says, "How to do this in 15 minutes," every one of those people are going to open that email.

Pat: So you're going into their objections and just using that as a means of opening an email, to kind of just say, "Hey, you're wrong actually. Here's why, and how you can get into my program and stuff."

Are the objections for them not fulfilling their desire the same as the objections for them not purchasing the product? Are you collecting specific information about why they're not buying versus why they're not meeting their desire?

Derek: It depends on who you're talking to. If you're talking to a prospect that's never seen the sales pitch before, you're looking for obstacles. If you're talking to someone who saw your product launch but didn't buy yet, you're looking for the objections that kept them from buying.

Pat: Is it straight-up okay to say, if for example you do a launch or people haven't bought yet, you might just ask the question, "Hey, how come you haven't bought yet?"

Derek: Yeah, of course. That's the "why didn't you buy" survey. I've run several of those.

Pat: Do you know Ryan Levesque, author of Ask? He has this email called the "Why do you hate me" email, and that's the subject line, "Why do you hate me?" and everybody

who gets that is going to wonder what the heck is going on and open it. It's essentially one of the last emails after a funnel sequence that has not worked.

It's his way of just asking, "I've tried my best to serve you. What's the deal here? How can I better serve you?" and he usually gets similar responses. "I didn't buy from you because…." That's such powerful information to know, why people didn't buy. But again, like I was saying earlier, people are afraid to know the truth.

Derek: Yes, but you have to be open to it if you want to get better. If you want to build a real business, this is how you do it.

So what do you do with this research? We just walked people through how to use the POD technique to get research. Now you want to start looking at these words that they're using and how you can start incorporating these exact words into your copy and into your email subject lines. The email subject line that gets opened the most is the email subject line that appeals to the specific reader at that specific time in their life.

Pat: Right, to the emotions that they're going through.

Derek: Yes. For example, do you remember when Facebook changed their organic algorithm and then killed organic reach?

Pat: Right, everybody flipped out.

Derek: Everyone flipped out. I sent an email out, "Hey, did your organic reach drop?" Highest open rate email I ever sent because everyone was thinking about it. Robert Collier says you want to enter the conversation that is going on in people's minds. We just gave you the groundwork so you can learn that conversation that's going on inside their heads, and now you want to take that and put it into your email subject lines.

Are there ways to boost the email subject line open rate? Of course.

Pat: Little tricks like have a dot-dot-dot. I don't know if that stuff even works.

Derek: Let me kind of give you the lowdown of how that works. The more obscure and general an email subject line, the higher the open rate usually. For example, if I send an email with a subject line like, "Hey," that's going to have a pretty high open rate.

Pat: That's it? Just "Hey"?

Derek: Yeah, there's some other marketers that do that, but if I were to do that and I say "Hey," that would have a really high open rate because it's triggering the curiosity of people.

Pat: Now you're just using that as an example, right? You're not telling everybody right now that they should….

Derek: Oh no, no, no. Don't use that subject line. The point is, the more curious you can make your subject line, the higher the open rate. I sent one last year, "I was in the hospital." They were like "What the heck? I've got to open that."

Pat: Is your heart okay, by the way?

Derek: Yes.

Pat: Good. This reminds me of when you first came onto the scene you had some posts and you were becoming very well-known for this thing called the information gap. Are we talking about the same thing here?

Derek: Yes.

Pat: Can you explain what that is for people who might not remember?

Derek: An information gap is that when there's a gap between what people know and what people want to know, they're going to desperately seek to close that gap. So when I use a subject line like "I was in the hospital," what people know is "Derek was in the hospital." What people want to know is "Why was he in the hospital and what happened?" The only way they can solve that is by opening the email.

You can use super obscure headlines that pique people's curiosity with an information gap and it's going to get you a high open rate. That doesn't mean it's going to get you good clickthroughs or good sales. When you use a curiosity trigger in email you might get higher opens, but you might get lower clicks because you're getting people to open the email that maybe they didn't want to open in the first place.

This is why I always laugh at people that say, "Hey, I got 50% more email opens," but email opens don't mean anything in the grand scheme of things. What means something is how much money you make, especially if you're selling something. So

using a curiosity headline like that might get the most opens, but it might get the least sales.

Then you can go super specific on a subject line. We'll go with a curiousity headline like I just told you. The other one is super specific. One might be like, "Last chance to buy Zippy Courses." Now you're going to get a much lower open rate, but you're going to send that message to people who were putting Zippy Courses on hold, and when they see "Last chance to buy Zippy Courses" it's going to make them want to open that email and take advantage of the last chance.

Pat: Right. You're being very clear what that email is about, and it's for a specific type of person, a person who is interested in Zippy Courses and hasn't gotten it yet.

Derek: Exactly. Now what does this have to do with the POD technique and writing email copy? Well, here's the deal. When you're starting a product launch or you're starting to sell something, you should always start with curiosity in the first set of emails. Email #1 should be curiosity based, and in that email that's where you introduce what the plan is, like what people are going to learn over the next few days and what's coming at the end of the email sequence.

The reason why you do this is you use curiosity to get the maximum number of opens so you can make sure you get the message of what's to come to the maximum amount of people.

Pat: And you kind of get more specific as you go along?

Derek: Then as you go through the launch you want to get more specific so you're only enticing the people who are most interested in buying to open the email.

Pat: Because they're not going to know everything that they need to know in the beginning, right? So you really need them to open those emails; hence, the curiosity trigger.

Derek: Exactly. And now how does this all apply? If you're going through the POD technique you're going to know who your ideal customer is and what their problems are. You might want your first email subject line to be a very general problem like, "Oh my god, I need more traffic," or "Oh my god, my pants don't fit," if you're going to be selling a fitness product. You want to go super general in the beginning, and then get more specific as you send more emails.

That's kind of the first step. You're going to know your customer better than they know themselves, and you want to know that when you're translating these into emails, especially when you're doing product launches, you want it to be broad and then go specific.

The next thing you need to know when you're actually writing the emails is you really want to create information gaps. As I said earlier, an information gap is the gap between what people know and what people want to know. How you can create an information gap is usually you want to tell a story that creates this idea of what people know and what people want to know, and the only way they can solve that is by clicking the link.

Pat: To see a video, for example?

Derek: To see a video or to read a sales page or to read the rest of a blog post or something along those lines. For example, let me read you some copy that I used for one of my blog posts recently –

Long before Steven Spielberg made ET, his dad told him to work his way up to the director's chair. Spielberg wisely ignored his father's advice. He said, "The first film I do, I'll be the director."

He never worked in the mail room and never brought anyone coffee. Instead of painstakingly working his way up through the ranks, he made amateur films – and heck, he even charged some of his friends to watch them. And when the time was right, Steven Spielberg was the director of the first professional film he worked on.

I call this strategy 'cutting the line,' and that's just one of the 7 secrets of wildly successful entrepreneurs. Want to know the other 6? I reveal them all in this new video.

Pat: Got it. Now I have to watch that video.

Derek: Now you've got to go watch that video to get the other 6 secrets.

Pat: And you told us a great story. Everybody can relate to Steven Spielberg and knows ET. When you tell a story like that, immediately I can't wait to hear the rest of it.

Derek: Exactly. So when you're writing your email copy, I guess the first thing is to decide what's the point of this email, and there could be different goals of different

emails. Some emails you want people to buy your product. Some emails could be you want people to click over to the page. Some emails could be you want people to just follow what you told them to do, and then look for the next email, like if you're doing a funnel for a product. So you want to decide "What's the goal of this email?"

Then you want to deliver your content in such a way where you're going to give them content, like what I just showed you there. I gave content. I gave them a strategy called "cutting the line." Now if they want to know more they have to watch the rest of the video, but I gave them a strategy, I gave them a story, I got them excited. Then I segued into what I want them to do, which was watch the video.

If you were doing this for a product and you wanted people to go read the sales page, instead of a video it could be, "This is just one of the 7 secrets of wildly successful entrepreneurs. I happen to be selling a product called The 7 Secrets of Wildly Successful Entrepreneurs. If you want to learn more you can buy the product right here." It could easily be a sales pitch too. You want to remember what the main goal of the email is and kind of nail that home.

Let me give you another example just from my own blog funnel. When I'm selling Zippy Courses, email #1 talks about the opportunity that exists online to sell online courses, and I walk people through all these different examples of people who are making a lot of money selling online courses.

Email #2 is "Here's how to find an idea for your first online course." Now that they want to create a course, what's the problem that they have? "I want to find an idea for a course," so email #2 is "How to find an idea for a course," and I walk them through it.

Pat: You're addressing one of the objections that people would have.

Derek: Right. Again, I'm using the POD technique to figure this out. "How do I find an idea for a course?" What's email #3? Take a guess.

Pat: You don't have enough time.

Derek: Sort of. I address it in the email but it's like, "Here's how to outline your first course in just a few minutes," which is again addressing the time thing, but I'm walking people through how to create their first course essentially.

What's email #4? "Now that you have an idea, now that you have an outline, now you've got to start creating your course and protecting your content. You need to buy Zippy Courses to do that."

Pat: And you've given a ton of value so they're going to want to work with you.

Derek: Exactly. This is how using the POD technique can help you engineer sales funnels, can help you engineer sales pitches, can help you engineer sales copy. It can help you do all of this stuff. Once you know who you're talking to, you kind of take people on this path from, "I just found out who you are" to "Here's my money."

Pat: In terms of getting even more tactical within these emails, at the point at which a click would happen, at that very line of text that people click on, do you have any strategies for increasing that or highlighting that or just copy to use around that click? Is Click Here the best way to go, or Instant Access? I know you pay attention to this stuff, which is why I ask you.

Derek: Here's the thing. I always use a very similar thing. "Click here to reveal the other 6 secrets." I say "click here" and I say exactly what's going to be on the other end of the click. "Click here to watch the video with the full 7 secrets."

I actually don't really test that particular type of link clicking because even if I jump the clicks up another 5%, I don't think it's really going to impact sales that much. I'd rather focus on testing a different hook.

As an example, I'd rather not micro-test the text that my link has but instead I'd rather test if I'm talking about not having enough time versus how to make money. I'd rather test big ideas as opposed to things like the text of my link or the color of my link.

Pat: So would you test, for example, a Steven Spielberg story versus the Jimmy Fallon story?

Derek: Exactly. That's something I'd probably be interested in testing before I would test the exact words of my link. Make sense?

Pat: Yup, you're probably right.

Derek: A lot of people out there like to do these micro-tests like, "I'm going to change the color of my button and maybe I'm going to get another 5% optins." It's like, "You know what? You're an idiot if you're doing that."

Pat: Well, old-school marketers have trained us to think that way. There's these guys like, "X number of split tests to help you increase your whatever," and it's just one little tweak and we think that – [laughing] for everybody out there who's listening, Derek's rubbing his forehead right now and has his face buried in his hands.

Derek: This drives me nuts. I did a video about why split testing is for idiots, and it's funny because I believe in conversion optimization. I just do not believe you should be doing split tests if you're less than $100,000 a year in revenue. There's other things that you could spend your time on that's going to help you generate more money than a split test.

There's these conversion idiots out there that like to say I'm stupid for saying that, but it's like if you make $100,000 and you get 20% increase on a split test, now you go from making $100,000 to making $120,000 – where if you have 10,000 people on your list and you get 20,000 people on your list, that could make you go from $100,000 to $500,000.

I'd rather focus on things that could actually move the needle, as opposed to these micro-tests like testing a link click. I'd rather roll out another sales funnel for a different product. I'd rather launch into a new vertical like now I'm doing Facebook ads, now I'm going to launch to YouTube ads, now I'm going to launch into doing guest posts, now I'm going to get a column in a major magazine. I'd rather do these big things that can yield big results, not this micro-test stuff.

Now, when you have enough money where you can hire that out, I don't think that's stupid. I don't think split testing is dumb. I just don't think that if you're currently in this bootstrap mentality you should focus on the micro. You should focus on the big hits.

Pat: Tell us how you really feel about that, Derek. No, I'm kidding.

Derek: Sorry for going on about that.

Pat: No, it's cool. It's sort of the Ramit Sethi approach of split testing. You know he's in the personal finance space and everybody's like, "Save $1 on a latte here, or cut out your mochaccinos today, and over time you're going to have X dollars in a savings account," where he's like, "Big wins, big wins, big wins."

Derek: Yes, he uses big wins. That's exactly it. The bottom line is you can't make a million dollars by trying to do these 20 cent gains every day of the week on your split

tests. Yes, some split tests can lead to a lot of money, but I think I ran like 45 split tests before I found a split test that actually moved the needle for me, so it's hard to do it.

I'm at a point now where I'll hire it out and have someone else focus on it for me, because when you're doing several million dollars a year, a split test that leads to 20% or something like that is a lot of money. It's a lot of revenue so it's not dumb to do. I'm just saying that if you're new, you're only working by yourself, you know nothing about split testing, you should focus on something else that can actually move the needle a little bit better for you.

Pat: Love it, like researching with your audience, talking to them, and all the stuff we talked about today.

Derek: Yeah, getting the product/market fit. That's the whole point of the POD technique is to understand your product and how it fits into the market so you can actually talk about it in a way that makes people care.

Pat: And I'm sure through these conversations you would actually find a lot of new products that could come out, and maybe even pivot or leave that initial product idea that you had.

Derek: Where do you think all my product ideas come from? They literally all come from those conversations, all of them.

Pat: I love it. So POD, just to reiterate for everybody out there listening, is find out the Problems of your audience and figure out what the Obstacles are in the way to reach their Desire. You want to have these conversations to be able to understand them, and these are long conversations, too. These aren't just like your top-level survey questions or an email exchange. In an ideal world you'd probably have a coffee with them and gauge the reactions on their face and all that kind of stuff.

Derek: Exactly. That's how you start transferring this into copy, and we kind of walked through the idea of don't forget about that when you're writing email copy, especially when you're first starting to do it. Especially in a product launch you want to start general and then get specific as the launch is ending.

If you're talking about regular content, though, you generally want your email subject lines to be very specific if it's just a piece of content, so you're only getting the right people to open the email.

Pat: So people don't feel duped or something.

Derek: Yeah, exactly. There's a lot of people out there that will just send general email subject lines all the time, and that's a mistake because, yeah, you're going to get a lot more people to open your email, but you're also going to burn them out. You don't want to burn them out. You only want to get the right people to open the emails at the right time.

There's nothing wrong with sending an email and only getting a 25-30% open rate, as long as it's the right people opening. So don't use general emails for just content. You want to use a general email like that if you're about to start a product launch, and then get more specific, but don't burn out your readers if you don't have to.

Pat: I think this is a great way to close. A lot of great information here, Derek. I'm sure a lot of people are going to get a lot out of this. Probably a lot of people are thinking, "Wow, I've been doing it wrong for so long." I think a lot of people are also going to understand that they have a lot more work to do in terms of understanding who their audience is.

Derek: I know this is probably one of the more advanced podcasts I've ever done because this is like internal mindset stuff that makes you try to prepare the foundation for a good sales sequence or for good copy, and it's not like what other people say like, "Hey, put scarcity in your headline" or all these other tactic minutia. This is more about understanding your customer.

If you could do one thing today that could really help you write better email copy, write better sales copy, it's to try to talk to 5 people in the next 7 days who you think are potential prospects. I think that's a good challenge to leave this off on, what do you think?

Pat: I agree. Five people is not too far out of reach, but it's going to get people enough uncomfortable to the point where when they do this they're going to see how amazing it is and hopefully do it a lot more.

Derek: And I would love to see people share. I think you post this where they could leave comments?

Pat: Yup.

Derek: I would love to see people commit to talking to 5 people by saying, "I'm in" in the comment section, and then do a follow-up in 7 days where they say, "I talked to 3 people. Here are the questions I asked and here's everything that happened. Thank you."

Pat: I love that, so go to smartpassiveincome.com/session184 and let us know you're in, the first time you're hearing this, and then come back and let us know what you found out. If you're listening to this in the far distant future you're probably going to come back to a lot of amazing things that people have found out, so hopefully you'll see that people are taking action and that you can too.

Derek, thank you so much for coming in again. Everybody can check out Derek at SocialTriggers.com and smartpassiveincome.com/zippycourses is my affiliate link for Zippy Courses. Derek, thank you so much for all the love and all the advice and wisdom.

Derek: Thank you for having me. I think people are going to really like this. Have a great day and good luck.

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I hope you enjoyed that episode with Derek Halpern, always bringing some amazing content to the podcast. It was kind of fun to actually do that one live on Periscope as well. Thank you to everybody who watched on Periscope. You can also follow me @patflynn on Periscope, and @derekhalpern if you want to follow Derek as well.

You can also check out Zippy Courses, a course software that I've used myself to help deliver some content to my audience and easily get paid for it. Go to smartpassiveincome.com/zippycourses. That is my affiliate link.

I also want to make sure you go and visit SocialTriggers.com and join Derek's list. It's great. He always pays attention to the words that he says, and I think you can learn a lot from just being on his list. I do that for a couple of people. I'm on Derek's list to learn, and the same with Ramit Sethi.

I also want to thank today's sponsor, 99Designs.com, which makes it super easy for you to create any sort of graphic design stuff that you need done in your business, whether it's a logo, to a complete website overhaul, to maybe just a single landing page on your site. Maybe it's an ebook cover or a cover for your next Amazon Kindle bestseller.

Whatever the case may be, all you have to do is head on over to 99Designs.com/spi, and when you sign up you put a little description of what it is that you're looking for, the style, and kind of what you want it to look like. Then designers from around the world will compete for your favorite design, and you get to vote on your favorite.

You even get to work with these designers as they're approaching that design that you like, and by the end of it you have a favorite that you can take home with you. If you don't have one then you get your money back, which is really cool.

Again, here's that link – 99Designs.com/spi. That will get you a $99 Power Pack of services for free that you can put towards your next design project, which will get you even more designers and some other goodies as well.

I'd also like to give a huge shout-out and thank you to Edgar, which is sponsoring this episode. Edgar is a tool that I use that helps me manage my social media updates. The truth is, when you post on Facebook and Twitter and LinkedIn and others, those posts, if they're not seen within the first 30 minutes, they're gone forever so all that time is sort of wasted. You have to kind of get lucky sometimes, but Edgar allows you to recycle these posts.

I use this every single day. This is one of those tools you get that, once you use it, you can't imagine life without it really. It's amazing how much it's increased my engagement on all these different platforms. It's amazing how much it's increased the amount of traffic coming back to my site as well, and again it does this in a very automated fashion, so I highly recommend you check this out.

I want to thank Laura Roeder who created this, who was a previous guest on the podcast as well. If you want to check it out, my listeners get to try Edgar for free, which is awesome. Just go to meetedgar.com/pat and you'll get to try it out for free, so check it out.

Thank you guys so much for checking in today. I really appreciate it. I hope you got a lot of value out of this particular episode. In the next episode I can't wait to serve you with a guest who's been on the show before. This is Nathan Barry from ConvertKit. We're going to talk more about the new email service provider that I've been using and talking a lot about recently and have pretty much fallen in love with.

So we'll talk with Nathan next time. He's very honest and up-front about the creation of this new start-up, I guess you could say, and some of the struggles that he's had with it too. You'll see why I love it so much, and more, in the next episode.

Until then, thank you so much. I appreciate you. Have an amazing week! Cheers.

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

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