SMART
PASSIVE INCOME

SPI 285

Accidental Entrepreneurship and Design Commerce with Jeff Sheldon from Ugmonk.com

Pat: This is the Smart Passive Income Podcast with Pat Flynn, session number 285. Three, two, one.

Announcer: Welcome to the Smart Passive Income Podcast, where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. Now your host—he drinks his coffee fast because he can't stand it when it cools down—Pat Flynn.

Pat: What's up everybody? Thank you so much for joining me today in this session of the SPI Podcast. Really excited you're here because I'm really excited to introduce to you Jeff Sheldon, the founder of Ugmonk.com. Now, I didn't hear about Jeff until I learned about him through Clay Hebert. Clay was somebody who we featured last week. I asked him, "Hey, who's somebody I should be interviewing related to Kickstarter, who just has an awesome brand, who's really cool, who can probably provide a lot of value to the SPI audience?" He was like, "Oh dude, you've got to interview Jeff Sheldon from Ugmonk." I'm like, "What's Ugmonk?" Clay is like, "Dude, it's this amazing company that has built such a loyal following now, it's doing very well." It started as actually a t-shirt brand. Jeff would incorporate some of his own designs for shirts that he would want to wear. He started selling them online, and then things started to grow from there. He's now added a lot more different kinds of products into his lineup. Recently he came out with a Kickstarter campaign that earned nearly a half million dollars.

In this episode today, we interview Jeff, we talk about how he built his brand, how he's kept it in a way that he's really happy with as it's continued to grow, all of the ideas and strategies that he's put into place to help it grow and get exposure. And then also, how he's run his Kickstarter campaign and some of the ins and outs of that, things that he learned from a previous one and all that kind of good stuff. A lot of great stuff to take away from this episode. If anything, I hope that Jeff just inspires you to really believe in yourself and what you're up to because he really did and now it's paying off. So, Ugmonk.com, U-G-M-O-N-K dot com. Mind you, I didn't ask him what that meant because on his website he says that that's kind of a secret between he and his family. It's a family-run business,

which is really cool too. His mom is a part of it, and we talk about that as well. It's so awesome. I'm a big fan of Jeff and I hope you will become one too. Here's Jeff from Ugmonk.com.

What's up everybody? I'm so, so thankful and honored to welcome Jeff Sheldon from Ugmonk on the SPI Podcast. Jeff, thank you so much for being here, I appreciate you.

Jeff: Yeah man, it's an honor to be on here. I'm a big fan of what you do.

Pat: Thank you. Ever since I've gotten introduced to you and what you're up to and Ugmonk.com, now I'm a big fan of yours. I actually just placed an order for something of yours because I'm so in love with what you've created. I'd love to go back to your origin story and how you got started with all this. Was Ugmonk your first foray into business? What were you doing before then?

Jeff: Yeah. I've been doing design and art pretty much my whole life. Maybe a similar background to you. But it was like . . . I was doing art. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with it. Got to college, and then I actually studied graphic design. I thought I was going to be an animator and do Pixar stuff, because that's what all of us thought coming up. But I realized that that wasn't super creative and wasn't the . . . I got into graphic design, so I call myself a designer by trade and an entrepreneur by accident, which I'm sure a lot of people can resonate with, because I didn't plan to necessarily turn what I was doing into a business and turn Ugmonk into a full-on lifestyle brand. But design is definitely what I love, and that's where Ugmonk was born out of.

Pat: Nice. Tell me how you got the idea for it. Where did the idea to do what you do start?

Jeff: Yeah. I was doing t-shirt design in college and was entering some of these contests, these online contests, Threadless.com. I'm sure a lot of people are familiar with those online sites, where you submit a design, people vote on them and then whoever gets the most, gets the highest score, gets curated by the team, gets their shirt printed

and you win a cash prize. I was doing that in college. First time I ever designed a t-shirt, and I didn't actually win on Threadless but I won on a clone site called Design By Humans. It was incredible because they printed my shirt, I got the physical product. They sent a shirt with the design, really nicely printed. I got a cash prize. It seemed massive at the time. I think it was like four or five hundred dollars. That kind of started me on this journey of wanting to do more t-shirt design. I kept winning a bunch more times on Design By Humans and some other sites. Then I realized, I don't own the artwork of the designs anymore. They get to own it and they get to keep reprinting it, making off me. So I said, in the back of my mind . . . it was literally, this . . . all I thought was, "What if I just design my own shirts, put out my own little e-commerce site instead of doing these contests?" That was the birth of Ugmonk.

Pat: What was that first design, if you don't mind sharing what it was?

Jeff: The first, I started with four designs. They were all typographic and geometric based. Very similar to what I have on the site today, if you go onto my site and browse. Some of the same shirts that I've been selling for all of these eight plus years, which is crazy in the fashion world or design t-shirt apparel world. But they were all based around this minimal, clean typographic style that I really like. I was like, "I would wear this. I bet there's 10 other people in the world that might want this too."

Pat: 10.

Jeff: I started with those designs. There's obviously more than 10 other people. Now we've sold . . . I've grown the brand slowly over the last eight years, and we ship to 70 countries, over 70 countries, tens of thousands of customers all over the world. It's taken on a life of its own. It's been a crazy, crazy journey.

Pat: That's so cool. Do you ever run into somebody, on the street or something, who's wearing an Ugmonk shirt? How do you feel if that does happen?

Jeff: Yeah, actually, I have. I've done that. I've seen . . . I've been in New York and different cities and come across people. It's a really wild experience. Most of the time, I don't approach them because it's super awkward, and I'm more of like a . . . I like to see my designs in the wild but I'm not going to go up to the guy and be like, "Hey, nice shirt." But I have friends and people on Twitter and stuff sending me photos all the time. "Hey, I just spotted one on the subway," or, "I just spotted one when I was in Madrid," or, "I was in Germany."

Pat: So cool.

Jeff: That's the craziest part about doing physical products.

Pat: That's so cool; I love that. Now going back to when you first started. Okay, you're going to put these designs up online—how did you even know how to do that? Did you have experience printing on shirts? Did you have somebody help you with that?

Jeff: I knew nothing. I knew how to design them. I knew how to use Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. I had never built a website before, so that's where my brother came in. He's a developer, so he helped me build our first very . . . if we look back at it now, it's pretty embarrassing, but it was like a wood grain background with mock-ups and chunky text. This was 2008. We built a site. We used a service called Big Cartel, which is still around today. Now we're using Shopify, which is Big Cartel on steroids. I built a site. I found a screen printer through these t-shirt forums. This is back when forums were still a thing. I didn't know anything about screen printing or the inks used or the process. I just kind of started talking to people, asking a lot of questions, and then got the first 200 shirts printed. I actually borrowed the money from my dad. I was right out of college. I was like, "I don't want to take my money out of my junior level design salary," and got the first run of shirts printed and hit the ground running.

Pat: What was the investment upfront to get everything up and running?

Jeff: It was about $2,000 for that run of 200 shirts. There were some

other minimal cost, but one of the biggest savings is that, me being a designer, I didn't have to outsource the design for the product or the website. Then with my brother building it, it was like I had the computer. It's basically just this small subscription cost to get things, domain and hosting, everything.

Pat: Nice. That must have been really cool to see your designs then online for sale. But I also know a lot of people put the things they design up online for sale, and then it's like crickets, and they have no idea how to get the word out there, how to market it. What was your thought? How did you actually get the word out there about your brand, your online store at that time?

Jeff: I think the first thing I did was I posted it in that forum, where I was asking people questions, and I used a little bit of the name that I built for myself on these other contest sites and said, "Hey." I could message people that had bought it or something. I told them, "Hey, I'm doing my own thing. Here's what it is." I gave them the URL and literally just sent out emails by hand to everyone I knew, and then also hit up some bloggers. This was back when design blogs were massive, before social media. I don't even know if Twitter was out. I wasn't on Twitter.

I sent emails to people, different typography blogs and t-shirt blogs. I was like, "Hey, this is what I'm doing. If you like it, I'd love to get on your site. If not, that's totally cool." Some of them started posting it and that drove . . . started getting eyeballs from all over the world. The whole blog world and social media has changed a lot, but that was the initial start, was just literally telling one by one.

Pat: That's so cool. I think that with all the tools we have available to us today, we suspect that if you're starting a business, there should be some magical button that you press that sends and spreads the word out to everybody, but honestly with businesses that are starting from scratch today, it's still . . . the same thing works. You've got to hustle, you've got to go out there, you've got to reach individuals and take the time to do that, just like you did. That kind of stuff still works. That's awesome.

I still want to talk about marketing and stuff in a minute, but what's curious to me is this whole idea of having a physical product that you're selling. I know you had listened to the SPI Podcast at one point in time—you told me that before we recorded, which is super cool. But all my stuff is digital, or, I'm now starting to get into a little bit of the physical world. But for you, it's not like a product and you're selling it online, but you need storage space; you need warehouse space. Tell me what that was like. You bought all these shirts. Where did you put them? How did you deal with shipping and handling when somebody placed an order?

Jeff: In the beginning, that's one of the biggest things I underestimated, was what do I actually do when four giant boxes of shirts show up? Then I'm like, "How am I going to send this? I guess I need to buy some sort of mailer. How am I going to print the labels? I guess I need a better printer." Right off the bat, you can tell how much I didn't think through things. Which I would actually say, to some extent, was helpful, because if I'd launched this as a startup or as something that I was trying to turn into my full-time job, I would have gotten way in over my head as far as how much money I invested in equipment and planned for it to be this big business someday.

It was completely the opposite. I was literally just making it up as I go and figuring out, "How do I send something internationally?" We were writing out customs forms by hand. My wife and I were newly married, I had just started at my full time job, and then during the evenings and weekends we would sit there and literally fold up the shirts and pack each one by hand. We had boxes in our little one-bedroom apartment, which it slowly started to become more and more in all of the rooms, except for, like, I think they were not in the kitchen, not in the bathroom. Every other room, every other space had boxes in the corner, stacked high. Which is kind of funny to look back at.

Pat: That's really cool. Now, in the moment of shipping something, tell me what was the process like back then and how you've been able to refine that. Somebody places an order. What was the journey like for you to get that out the door?

Jeff: Back when we started, I was doing . . . I think I was actually taking them all to the post office, standing in line and paying for them there, because I literally was like, "I don't know, is there an app to do this?" Was there even anything . . .? Then I quickly realized, you could do it through PayPal, and then after that a bunch of years ago, we switched to a program called ShipStation. That was an absolute lifesaver. ShipStation—and this is not, like, an endorsed . . . I don't get paid anything for saying this. They basically tie into Shopify or a lot of e-commerce platforms, take all the order data and automate the whole process, including the customs, international customs stuff, the weights, the prepaid postage, everything. You literally just have to go down and check a box and make sure the weight's right to click print. You can dash process things. Now we're way, way faster. It's a much more well-oiled machine. But again, it was just learning and looking for things. ShipStation, I'm not even sure if they were out in the beginning. We've kind of grown and still continue to refine those processes.

Pat: That's cool. ShipStation has been mentioned. I think it was on this podcast or maybe my other show, AskPat. A lot of people who have . . . They were coming on as the sponsor, and a lot of people who actually started to use that as a result of the sponsorship has just been saying amazing things about it. I know that that's true. It's really helpful when you're shipping out physical items. When you say "we," who are you speaking about in your business?

Jeff: Sure. We're a really small team, and people might get the impression that we're a lot larger than we are, and that's fine because of the way that our website, everything presents itself, and the way that I've designed it. But I hope that my personality and the smallness of it also comes through. It's me. I run most of the day to day, everything from designing to photography to creative advertising, everything. Then my brother is a business partner, and he helps with a lot of strategy, a really good sounding board for me to bounce things off of. Then my wife helps out in a bunch of different capacities. Like I said, she used to help literally fold and bag every shirt. She's always been there, helping in all sorts of different ways. Then my mom is an employee who actually

manages all the fulfillment and shipping. Every single order that comes in right now, actually, she's the one packaging and shipping that out, and then we bring in part-time help as well just to help during the busy times and during sales. Then my sister-in-law handles customer service. It's a true family business. Everything else is just contracted out. I work with a lot of small shops, different photographers or screen printers or leather good makers. That's the core of the Ugmonk team.

Pat: That's so cool. Your mom, Mrs. Sheldon is it?

Jeff: Yeah.

Pat: Dude, so you can say like, "Guys if you have any problems, just talk to my mom."

Jeff: Yeah, totally.

Pat: That's so awesome. I love that.

Jeff: Yeah, it's worked out really well. I'll interject one thing: A lot of people are like, "I can't believe you work with your family. Doesn't that create tension? That would be crazy, I would never work with family." I think it's just different for different people. Our family just gets along, and we work well together. There's not a lot of conflict when it comes to business and that kind of thing. But I would also tell people, if you know there's going to be conflict, or you know that you don't work well with your siblings or your parents, then don't try and force the issue. It's better to leave family and business separate.

Pat: Yeah, that's awesome. Thank you for interjecting with that. Okay, t-shirts—that's how it started. What was the next product after t-shirts?

Jeff: I started doing screen printed posters, which was basically the same designs just on posters, which was a really easy transition because I was working with the same screen printer, one-color designs, just picking out paper stock and things like that. That was the next step, and then I started getting some leather journals, the

leather sketchbooks. That led into the leather mouse pads, which led into a bunch of other things, wallets and messenger bags. It was not necessarily the path you would see a t-shirt company normally go, going from t-shirts to leather goods. It was a weird jump, but it was all . . . Ugmonk has always been about creating products that I personally wanted and wanted to use, so I was like, "I really want a nice leather sketchbook," and I made that transition. Now we've gone all the way to the Kickstarter that I just launched, called Gather, which is more of a desk organizer and productivity space that I'm getting into.

Pat: Yeah. Gather is the product that I, right before this call, I purchased because I was doing research and I was like, "Dude, I need that." We'll talk more about that and what it is and the Kickstarter campaign in just moment. When you think back in your journey since you started, were there any moments that you remember that were big moments in the life path of the business and spreading the word out there? Or was it just a steady growth this whole time?

Jeff: I'd say more of a steady growth. That's not as exciting or glamorous to talk about, but if you were to look at the growth curve, it hasn't been any type of hockey stick or overnight thing, where we got mentioned on Oprah's favorite things or somebody in a popular band wore one of the shirts, which . . . people have worn shirts and there's been things that have been cool. The biggest thing that really picked up the pace was early on, the, "And then I woke up," t-shirt. It's a gray shirt with a big black ampersand and on the bottom of the ampersand it says, "Then I woke up."

That shirt got picked up on multiple larger design blogs and started bringing eyeballs from all over the place that people had never heard about Ugmonk. I'm not talking thousands of orders—it was probably like 70 shirts or 100 shirts that we sold in a few days, which was completely . . . that was massive compared to what we were doing. But that was kind of like . . . I didn't expect that many people to be interested in what I was doing, and people were asking when the next shirts were going to come out. When can I do new colors? That was the first real big moment I think for me.

Pat: That's really cool. What do you think it was about that shirt in particular, the "And then I woke up" shirt?

Jeff: I would love to say I have a formula for why the most popular shirts are the most popular, but honestly, as the designer, I even can't figure it out. The most popular shirt of all time that we sell is called mountains. It's literally two overlapping triangles, a red and a blue triangle. I've done other colorways that create a smaller white triangle. But that shirt has outsold every other shirt by far. I can't tell you that it's the golden ratio or it has some deep meaning behind it, or whatever, but something about it resonates with people. They tell me, "You know, that's the shirt I slip in my suitcase when I'm traveling. I love wearing it. It doesn't have a big logo, it's not branded, but it feels like I can wear it out anywhere for any occasion." I'm constantly trying to figure out, what did I do there that I can do again that attracts people? But I think it's just something about the design and the style that resonates. It's such a subjective thing.

Pat: That's super cool. Congrats on that, and I am sure there are going to be many more designs that you create that are going to baffle you in terms of, "Why is this one successful?" I can't wait to see those. You had mentioned having conversations with your customers. Do you prioritize that? If so, how do you actually communicate with them? Do you value the community that you built?

Jeff: Yeah, definitely. That's a huge part of what Ugmonk is, and I think what I can attribute some of my success to is, I've been very open and transparent, ever since the beginning, to pull back the curtain and talk to people. I get emails, as I'm sure you do, every single week, and it's hard to keep up with all of them. But people are asking for advice or asking for a critique on their design or just giving me feedback on what other products they'd like to see. Through Twitter, Instagram, and my email list, I've tried to keep that door open and be really personal with all my customers. Even when we send out our emails, it's literally me. I'm typing the email and I'm sending it from Jeff, not like this corporate Ugmonk team or anything. I'm sharing things that I like, other products that aren't even Ugmonk products. I'm sharing the process of how I do things.

I'm going to a whole post about how I launched this Kickstarter, very similar to, I think, your whole model of you've been really open and transparent. People respond really, really well to that, and knowing that it's just you on the other side, or me on the other side.

Pat: Totally. That's really cool. What advice would you have for . . . because you had mentioned some people actually reach out to you for advice, and so I'm going to ask you, so maybe this will cut out some of the emails that might come your way after this. But anyway, for a person listening on the other end right now, they're a designer. Maybe it's t-shirts, maybe it's website design or something else. What's one piece of advice you have for them to help with advancing their career and sticking with their true design heart?

Jeff: Man, that's tough. I think I would say, one, make sure that you're designing things that you personally like. There's client work, which is important to design—meet the client's expectations and, obviously, deliver what they want. But if you're only designing things that other people are dictating, it runs you dry really fast, and you get really frustrated. If you're doing client work or you're doing something for a larger company, make sure you're carving out time on the side to experiment and create the things that you're . . . like, "I would love to have this app," or, "I would love to have this sketchbook or this t-shirt."

Make sure that that part of your life doesn't get crushed because of the client relationship side of things. Also, don't be afraid to put things out there and ask for feedback, even if it doesn't feel like your best thing ever. I think there's an aspect of self-promotion that I resisted for a long time but I realized was necessary. Not that everything I put out is 100% perfect, is the best thing ever, but I had to get over that hurdle of, "I don't want to show this to anyone because it doesn't really look 100% yet." I would encourage people to start posting stuff, whether it's even on Instagram or just something really, really easy. Start getting feedback and start connecting with people about it. Don't hold it secret forever.

Pat: Why do you think you were so hesitant to ask for that feedback in the beginning?

Jeff: I think the internet has opened us, has exposed us to so much. There are so many better designers than me. There's 15 year-olds that could probably school me in Photoshop or designing a website. It's intimidating because we're around all these people. We're in tune with what's out there. You scroll through any of these inspiration sites, and it's almost like, "Why do I even try?" But at the same time, if those people never tried, that could have been the one thing that they got noticed for and they've done 100 other things. I feel like it's important to at least show people what you're doing, because that's the only way you'll grow, instead of hiding in your corner and messing around, designing 14 versions of your website, never showing it to anyone.

Pat: It's so smart and so true. If somebody was listening to this and they are more of an introvert, and they're just not good around people, they might think that. I know I'm that way. I'm naturally an introvert too. I have learned over time the importance of going out there and getting uncomfortable a little bit. I think you even have a shirt that says like, "Get uncomfortable."

Jeff: Yeah, exactly.

Pat: What would you recommend for that introvert? First of all, would you consider yourself an introvert?

Jeff: Yeah, definitely. I'm better when I'm alone in my office, it's quiet, I'm working. I get charged up by just sitting here, being in that kind of solitude state. It might sound a little odd, but I don't naturally just want to go out and tell people what I do. I don't even like to introduce myself as, "Oh yeah, I run this company and this is all the products and the success I've had." It feels awkward just because I'm not that type of personality. But the internet and the way that we can communicate with people has actually made that a whole lot easier. I don't have to be screaming from the rooftops about what I do. I can just have people opt-in that are interested, and then I can

communicate with them through emails and social media.

Pat: That's really cool. I can tell right now Jeff, people are listening to this and you are now gaining a lot more fans because of how honest and transparent you are, like you said. Thank you for exuding that and being a proponent for being yourself but also pushing those boundaries a little bit to help others too. Thank you for that.

Jeff: For sure.

Pat: This Kickstarter campaign . . . it's Kickstarter month here on SPI, and we've talked to Clay Hebert and a few other people over Kickstarter stuff. Why did you decide to do Kickstarter for this design for a modular organizational productivity solution?

Jeff: There's multiple reasons. I can go through them real quick. One was I actually did need an investment to create the tooling for Gather. The injection molded pieces, the tooling alone costs $18,000 just to make the mold. That's not even including the production run. I wanted to validate the product, and Kickstarter is a great way of validating a product and seeing if there's people that want it. Even though I have an audience and I had a lot of people asking about it when they saw the prototypes, I thought it was a better way to launch it that just on my site. The second aspect of it is that Kickstarter is a really interesting mechanism because what it does is it allows people to help you on the journey. It makes them feel good because they're helping you, and they also get the reward. It's not like they're shopping or price comparison looking on Amazon. The backers actually get double the reward because they're like, "I got to help Jeff make this. I get to watch that number go up," and we crushed our goal by over 2000%, and they get the reward for the best price that we'll ever have. Kickstarter is the ultimate example of doing stuff in the open. It's like you're seeing everything from the process to the revenue numbers to the problems in the comments, the whole thing. We were able to get a way bigger ripple effect by launching on Kickstarter and reaching new eyeballs than just the Ugmonk community.

Pat: Yeah, that's really cool. I see here that over 2,500 backers pledged nearly half a million dollars to help bring this project to life, which is . . . wow. Does that blow your mind?

Jeff: Yeah. We're only not even a week since we closed the campaign last week. Honestly, I did not expect it to go that huge. In the back of my mind, I hoped that it would go big. My big, big goal that I had spreadsheeted out was $100,000. It was like, "If we can hit six figures, this would be a game changer." We did $100,000 in the first 24 hours.

Pat: Dude.

Jeff: It blew every expectation out of the water. The most exciting thing for me is not even the dollar amounts, because a lot of that's going to go right back into inventory and invested in the product. It was seeing something, an idea that I had to get rid of all the clutter and all the crap on your desk. That idea was validated by so many people that resonated with the same problem. They're like, "Yeah, there's nothing, there's no way, there's no beautifully designed way to contain everything and customize it on your desk." To see that validated was the ultimate reward.

Pat: We're going to put a link up to Gather in the show notes. I highly recommend you watch the video for it, if anything. You do a great job of explaining what it is that you've built and why and comparing the other solutions that are out there, like those plastic ones you get at Target that are ugly or whatever. No offense to Target; I shop at Target all the time. I was watching that. It's only four minutes in length. I know, since talking to Clay and a few other people, that video is rather important. How long did that four-minute video take to shoot?

Jeff: Yeah, the video, especially for Kickstarter, you've got to nail it. That's one of the things we spent the most time on. We were planning, storyboarding, and scripting it out about six months ago, getting ready, and then we had some delays in production, prototyping, but started the initial concepts for it about six months ago, and then

dialed it in just a few months or a month before they campaign. Then a friend and I shot for three very full days down in Nashville. Then we went probably through, I don't know, 18, 19, 20 versions of edits going back and forth and changing things around to get to the final video that you see there. I forget the number of gigs of footage, or terabytes of footage that we shot, but it was a very, very involved process. But I'm really happy with the result, and I think we pared it down to really clearly communicate the problem, solution, the reason for Gather. The people that understand the need for it . . . not everybody wants to pay $100 for a beautiful desk organization system, but the people that do were backing it before the video is even over. The video really, really helped.

Pat: Yeah. It sold me. Like I said, we'll put a link up to it. You can pre-order it before it gets shipped. I think it told me it was going to shipped in December of 2017, which will be nice, right around my birthday, which is great.

Jeff: Yeah.

Pat: What was the hardest part around and surrounding your Kickstarter campaign? Because I'm sure it wasn't all unicorns and rainbows, right?

Jeff: Definitely not. Kickstarter, if anyone who's listening has run a Kickstarter, they know exactly how much work it is because it's insane. It's literally a full-time job while you're running it, and before you're running it and after, because now I'm dealing all sorts of other things, following up with backers and all the not fun parts, not glamorous parts. The biggest . . . the most effort that we put into it was probably the way we wanted to communicate the product. A lot of people do shoot a video and it's okay. They shoot photos and they're okay. They show the product but they're not great.

When you have thousands of other Kickstarter campaigns on there, it's important to really, really dial in every little detail on that page. Even . . . I have a bunch of animated GIFs on the page as you scroll down, showing the product in action. Getting all those details, so

when somebody lands on it, if they're on their phone or they're just quickly browsing, that they know exactly what the product is. It's easy to say that, and it's a lot harder to pare it down and actually do that. We just spent a lot of time thinking through, "How do we tell this story in a very natural, not-infomercial way, but at the same showing the importance of the product?"

Pat: Yeah, the animated GIFs are great. Honestly, I didn't even make it all the way down there before I bought, but I'm looking at them now, and they're beautiful and really do a great job of explaining all the different setups and the ways that the product can be used. That's great. You were talking about how it was kind of like a full-time job during the launch period, or during the campaign. Tell me what a typical day was like during, and I'm sure they weren't all the same, but what would be a day like in the middle of the launch?

Jeff: In the middle of the campaign it slows down a little bit, in the first week or so. The first days were just absolutely crazy. I had never seen my Twitter feed blow up like it was. I was getting retweeted and shared like nothing I've ever done, even the biggest product launch I've ever done. I was just trying to keep up with that. I could have easily let it all go by, but I tried to at least thank everyone or favorite their tweet, because every single person that helps spread the word and told their followers and their fans, that means a ton to me. I try to make sure to keep up with all that, all the comments coming in or the questions, like, "Oh, do I have to add shipping?" Logistical questions.

Then thinking about what was the next step, like, I needed to update the backers. I needed to send out another email for people that maybe didn't know what it was. Even before we launched, a lot of that was . . . actually I had done a lot of that prep work, thinking about teasing the campaign. I had a teaser video. I was showing little snippets of the product. By the time I launched, when I got to launch, it wasn't the . . . all the work started then. I had already built up the anticipation, where people were backing it before I could even refresh the page when I launched, which was crazy. I think the real work starts way ahead of the campaign, and that makes the actual campaign go a lot smoother so I'm not scrambling for ideas

of, how do I promote? Or, how do I get people to share this? We had a whole list and game plan in place.

Pat: If you were to recommend a time period from start 'til launch date, how much time would you say is necessary in between those times to really do it right?

Jeff: It depends on how many other things you're juggling.

Pat: Sure.

Jeff: Because I've been doing it alongside of all the other products and Ugmonk product releases. I would say at least six months to start planning and to give yourself time to really think through how you want to tell the story, what's the video going to be. Then obviously the product itself is important, so we ran into problems where the last set of prototypes we got, the prototypes just didn't look great. They weren't going to look great on video, so instead of faking it and running with that, I waited for a whole 'nother 45 days to get the next set of prototypes. The product timeline can really push you back too, but I would say at least six months to really do it thoroughly and thoughtfully.

Pat: And then now that it's over, and then now that this thing's being produced, obviously it's a completely different ball game now, and you are talking about manufacturing and shipping, all that stuff. What are the major challenges related to that part of it and the fulfillment?

Jeff: I did a Kickstarter four or five years ago with a friend for another product called OpenFrame. We ran into so many issues because we didn't plan this out. We didn't think about what's our packaging going to be, or what's the actual cost to ship something overseas and how fast can we produce them. We only had I think like 500 backers, which was double what our goal was, but I was literally trying to ship these things out and change addresses, do all this crazy work myself. That did not scale, and I ended up losing a lot money or breaking even.

This time, I set up all these things to scale. I have fulfillment center

down in Texas that I'm going to work with. My manufacturer, they're ready to scale as big as I possibly can go, which . . . having that ceiling removed really helped encourage me to keep pushing the campaign. All the pieces I need in place are already operating, already moving. We've already got a jump start on the tooling for the pieces. I guarantee there will be issues. If you talk to me in a few months, I'll probably say, "I can't believe this is taking that long," but that's the nature of physical products. I set this one up to be successful. I had no idea it would be this successful, but I'm glad that I got my ducks in a row ahead of time.

Pat: Nice, nice work. Now, is this something that is going to live on Ugmonk.com eventually and be yours? What if somebody came along and they were like, "Dude, Jeff, we love this Gather thing. We want to buy it from you." What would be going through your head at that time? Is this something that you wanted to "exit" with? I'm really curious to know in your head where you're at with that.

Jeff: That thought was never really came across my mind, like I would want to sell this and just kick back and do the apparel side of things, because really as soon as I saw the Kickstarter taking off and people wanted Gather and they were excited about it, I already have three or four other ideas in line with the same workspace, beautifully designed productivity space, ideas for products that I want to put out. So this is just the tip of the iceberg for me. And seeing how much this space is wide open for this kind of thing, I'm not ready to sell or exit.

Obviously, I guess if the dollar amount was big enough and somebody approached me, which . . . I have been getting some very interesting emails and opportunities after raising almost half a million dollars on Kickstarter. But I'm not ready to sell this. I really want Ugmonk, the next life of Ugmonk, to be centered around more of this industrial design, timeless, really well-crafted goods. I'm pumped to get Gather out the door so I can start doing other add-ons and extensions and different pieces, and then start working on the next few products that I have.

Pat: I love that. I'm pumped for you, man, and I'm really excited about

this product. I'm really excited to receive it later this year. Thank you for all the tips and stuff related to Kickstarter as well. It's an environment that I may be getting involved with as well, later down the road. It's really helpful. I have to comment on the name of it too, Gather. I get it in terms of gathering your things and making it easy to organize, but I think it really speaks to what you are creating here with the Ugmonk brand, the gathering of community and to have people come in who really like high quality, well-designed, clean, minimal stuff. I think it's super cool. I love everything about it. I'm a fan now, Jeff. Ugmonk.com, guys. That's where you want to go and check this out. We'll put all the links in the show notes too. Jeff, where else can people connect with you, potentially communicate with you? Where would you recommend they go?

Jeff: You can find me on Twitter @Ugmonk, it's U-G-M-O-N-K, and Instagram. My email is just jeff@ugmonk.com. Like I said, I'm always happy to help out as many people as I can. sometimes it takes a little bit longer, depending on the number of emails I get, but I'm an open book and happy to help. Yeah, just honored to be on and honored to hear the kind words coming from you because I love what you do. I have been a fan of yours for a while as well.

Pat: Awesome. I'm a fan of you. Jeff, thank you so much. Ugmonk.com. Just, congrats. I'm wishing you even more success.

Jeff: Thanks for that.

Pat: Alright, I hope you enjoyed that interview with Jeff. As you can tell, super cool guy, a lot of great information, and just wants to share it all. I love that. Jeff, thank you so much for being a long-time listener to the show. I think that's really cool, but I'm so thankful that you were able to come on and share some wisdom as our featured guest today. Thank you so much.

All the links and resources mentioned in this episode are available on the website at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session285. Again, SmartPassiveIncome.com/session285. You can check out Jeff once again at Ugmonk.com, U-G-M-O-N-K dot com.

Alright, guys. Thanks so much. I appreciate you, and I look forward to serving you in the next episode of the Smart Passive Income Podcast. But really quick, if you haven't done so yet, please subscribe to the show. If you haven't yet left a review, those are one of my favorite things to do, every once in a while. Once a week, I go in there and I read the reviews. I even go to different countries and read the reviews that come into there. I'm super thankful for them, so guys, if you have moment here at the end of September and you're listening to this, or even in the future, I would be super grateful if you took a moment to leave a quick honest review about the show on iTunes. That would help out a lot, actually, so thank you so much. I appreciate you, and I look forward to serving you in the next episode of the Smart Passive Income Podcast. Bye.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income Podcast at www. SmartPassiveIncome.com.

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