

Jim Cockrum Interviews Mark Mathis Setting up multiple eCommerce Websites

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<http://www.jimcockrum.com/blog/?p=1468>

Or find Mark on the forums of MySilentTeam.com

To find out more about Mark's course where he teaches how to set up eCommerce sites step-by-step in just a couple days check out:

<http://www.mysilentteam.com/ecom.html>

(the mp3 of this interview is on that page as well)

Jim: Hi, this is Jim Cockrum of MySilentTeam.com and I'm excited today, I've got Mark Mathis as a special guest with us today. I'll introduce him a little bit more here in just a minute but he has been doing a great job building e-commerce sites, making a lot of money in setting up several sites. He got real system behind it. He's learned a ton about this, he knows more than I do by far, and I'm excited to learn from him today about how he's doing what he's doing, how he finds all these great niche markets and where he gets his products, how he automates the process, etc. And, some of you even send in some really good questions in anticipation of this call today. I'm just excited and looking forward to this interview for a long time now. Since he first emailed me, I jumped on it and said I've got to interview this guy. So Mark, how are you doing today, buddy?

Mark: I'm doing great. Thanks for having me.

Jim: It's truly my pleasure. I'm very excited about this call, many people are going to be listening to this, and I think we're going to really help a lot of people out. I recently released on my blog a list of some of the things I'm most excited about and this one of them. Although, I'm not doing a whole lot of it myself, I know so many people like you, who just came along right at the perfect time, who were having good success with e-commerce sites. And how many of these

sites, just to get people little credibility about who it is I've got as my guest today, Mark, how many of these sites have you set up e-commerce sites?

Mark: I started literally dozens and probably over a hundred over the years.

Jim: That's fantastic. I mean, I've got a true expert today. You've set up dozens, if not hundreds. I love it that you don't even know the exact number anymore. That's phenomenal. So, we'll dig in to the content and advice from you, but let's start off with just who you are, a little background, how you know me and how you came to do this interview. Just give us a little bit of an overview. I know you're down in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, right? You're a family guy. I know that about you.

Mark: Right.

Jim: We've talked a little bit. But really, the two of us, we don't know each other really well yet. Maybe you know more about me from reading my blog, etc. but still say something about who Mark Mathis is.

Mark: All right. As you said, I live down in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and I found about you, I've been a member of OfflineBiz.com for several years now and I'm also a member of My Silent Team and both of those have been just excellent sounding bullets for me for questions that I have. There's a right community of wide-minded entrepreneurs and then you can just go in there and if you have a question about anything related to selling items online or to marketing your local business or just basically anything related to marketing and doing a business, you can find guys in there and girls in there that are going to help you and I found some of my best outsourcing contacts as well and find the forums and being a part of that. It also provided me with really good creative marketing ideas and ways to diversify my income and then, I became reader of your blog as well and just taught highly the way that you interacted with your customers and just thought this might be something that might be valuable for new members.

Jim: That's fantastic, Mark. I appreciate you contacted me then. You're a real gem for me to find, a guy that has been learning from me for a while and I don't even necessarily know you're out there doing all these cool stuff and you contacted me and tell me about all these great things you're doing. And then, you give me some credit for it which I love hearing success stories and I've been

a small part of playing a role. So, that's exciting for me and I think everyone listening to this can say, "Hey, this stuff really works." Jim knows what he's talking about sometimes which is cool to hear but even more important than that, when people do succeed, they're willing to share it. And, that's the beauty of these forums and this community is these people doing it that are succeeding and they're willing to help you share what they've learned and this is another perfect example of it so that is awesome, man. I appreciate the positive comments on the two sites as well.

Mark: Absolutely. You know, I came to the e-commerce site kind of about accident. I worked with Accenture which is a large consulting firm for a little over four years, my wife and I both did and we did strategy and technology consulting for very large corporations and the average profit was from 10 million through all the way up at 300 million. And, we were doing basically designing systems, build systems and implement those systems in these different corporations. And overall about four-year period, we've just kind of burnt out and we want to start a family, so we decided to move back close to our family in Baton Rouge. So, I became the marketing director for one of the largest data centers in the Southeastern United States. We grew that company from about 2 million in revenue to about 8 million by the time that we left, and I learned a tremendous amount about small businesses and some of the opportunities like just on the Internet.

So, around 2005 or so, I had a confluence of different things that happened in my life. First of all, I had my first son which I had with my beautiful wife, Leslie and three little boys. Jake is my six-year-old and then getting right through my identical twin, three-year-olds. And so, at that time, I had Jake. And at the same time, my dad was failing in his health and so I decided to leave that position and take over my family business which is stock house plans design business. So basically, we design house plans that you see in books and magazines at Barnes & Noble's and books in those kinds of places. We market our plans through different brokers.

So at that same time, when I was taking over that business, I needed a way to make additional income that didn't require a lot of time during the day for me to run. So in starting some research, we found opportunities for building these e-commerce sites, very niche e-commerce sites, and supplying them by using what we called dropshippers. And basically, what that is we find a very specialized group of people who are starving for products and maybe they can't get them in their local area and you source those products, you build a website with a shopping cart, and if you need them to be a WordPress site or it can be some of the more traditional shopping carts like Yahoo! Small Business or ShopSite or

some of the other links. And then, you don't have to inventory the products or answer customer service.

In effect, the supplier becomes the fulfillment house, they hold all the inventory. You just basically take their data and their images. Now, you put them on your website and then you draw traffic to your site. So, when you get an order in, you don't have that product sitting in your inventory; you basically have unlimited inventory with none of the financial exposure to sharing inventory and stock. What you do is you price your product at a point where you make a profit on it. When you get the order and you place that order with the droshipper; they package the order; they mail it directly to the customer, it doesn't have their name anywhere on the package and you basically just collect the difference between what you sold it for and what you paid for.

And, the beauty of this is you don't have to be expert in any of the areas that you open your sites in because that's what the dropshippers and suppliers are there for, they're the experts on the different products that you're selling. So, if you have a question that's very specific that you don't know about, all you have to do is just call that dropshipper or email them many times and ask them like you question yourself, they'll respond to the customer, so it's a great way -- basically, the world is yours so you can open a store on any niche area and not really have to worry about being the expert in that place. And, that's what really attracted me to the area. It gives you the leverage on the work of other people through outsourcing. You could set up systems in your business where you could batch task together, for example, returning calls and returning emails. That's something that can be very easily done through a virtual assistant or a part-time worker. And it just allows you to have this little money machine out there running all the time, and you have systems in place to deal with processing all of those, answering questions, and all the different things that go with typically running a business.

Jim: Beautiful. You've really spelled it out in those few minutes, probably two to three minutes there of business model that is just a dream world for a lot of people listening to this like, Really? Can it be that easy because let me hit some of the highlight in filling a couple of questions that people might have as I was listening to you talk.

You talked about dropshipping, because the first thing that comes to mind often when someone wants to set up a website is well, how am I going to handle all of the inventory? Do I have to go out and spend \$5,000 and buy a bunch of inventory and put it in my garage and how that works? Well, no. Dropshipping,

shipping like you just said and I'm repeating, is someone else does the shipping. You send them the orders one at a time and correct me if I'm wrong but your set up pretty much exclusively with dropshipper arrangements on all of your sites, is that what you told me on most of your sites?

Mark: Pretty much. Now, I'm 100% dropshipped. And, the way that I typically go about it is you can set up with your dropshipper initially and if it gets to the point where through testing that you verified this is a big niche to be in and you enjoy the site, you can then go to the dropshippers and actually buy in larger quantity and stock that you want to.

Jim: Right.

Mark: And, you can get a lot of more margins out of that. But, I just never wanted to deal with hassles of having someone in my office packaging out and shipping those out and find my capital and actually have products here that may or may not sell and not to mention, there is a downside.

Jim: And, if I were coaching you to that next level of success for you and for the benefit of those listening to this call because let's just do some round numbers, let's say it's a product you sell for \$50 and the dropshipper will sell it to you for \$40 one at a time, so you're making your \$10. But if you were to order a hundred of them, they'd sell them to you for 25 bucks, right? So, there's obviously money if you'll buy in bulk. Well, if you don't want those things sitting in your garage, but there's another option to you and I know you're aware of this, so I'm half-educating my audience listening and half giving you another option maybe to strongly consider for some of your more popular products. You could send all of those items over the Fulfillment by Amazon, the FBA program. Just as a little side commercial, if you go to **provenamazoncourse.com**, you'll see our FBA training course there. But literally, they'll do all the shipping for you. So, you basically turn Amazon into your dropshipper, but you're able to acquire your products at a much cheaper price. And, you send them in and as the orders come in, they fire them out at the door for you just as if they were dropshipping. But, you didn't have to keep the stuff in your garage is the beauty of it. And, the part that you may not realize, Mark, is their shipping discounts are insane because they ship more stuff around the world than anybody. So, when they send you their bill for shipping, it's less than what you could've shipped it for yourself by far.

Mark: I've heard that.

Jim: There is a lot of good reason.

Mark: I was just saying --

Jim: Go ahead.

Mark: -- I've heard that and I've also purchased the Amazon course from you as well and it's tremendous information. I'm very interested in looking at that for a couple of my businesses because Amazon really has changed, the value proposition. It's now very doable to do something like that and you get the best of both worlds. You get the cheaper cost of the products in bulk but then, you don't have to deal with any of the hassles that come with maintaining the inventory.

Jim: Sure. You can even train your dropshipping company to tag this stuff for you before they send it to Amazon. So, it doesn't even come to you; it goes straight to the Amazon warehouse, Fulfillment by Amazon warehouse ready to be pulled off the shelf and shipped. So, you've really added no new steps; you just make them bigger. Instead of ordering one at a time, you're ordering 50 at a time or a hundred at a time, paying a lot less. You're still never touching the inventory.

Mark: Right.

Jim: But, that's like advanced stuff but that just how people do it. I'm very focused on creating it. If people don't know me very well yet, I want multiple income streams and that's something that you've been pursuing since day one, meaning, once I've launched it, I can pretty much forget about it. Now maybe, I still manage that business but I don't work in that business. There's a big difference, and you definitely get it which why your messages are resonating so strongly already. You've got dozens, if not hundreds or more of these sites. And, you're not sitting on the phone everyday answering customer inquiries. You're forwarding those questions over to the dropship expert.

Mark: That's right.

Jim: You're letting them handle the process for you. So, what you described in the first couple of minutes of this call was a very viable business model, and I want to put people at these too.

Another thing they might be thinking right now is, "Well, I don't know how to build a website." You mentioned the WordPress and some Yahoo! options and things and this is the stuff we'll talk about again later in this call but you don't have to be technically skilled. And I tell people this all the time, I can't build a pretty website to save my life. I've never actually even tried or the one time I did try, it was a disaster so I kind of gave up and that was a blessing for me to give up and let others do it for me. And, I've heard you talked about outsourcing now, how were you building these pretty sites for all these dozens or more of e-commerce sites? Are you technically skilled?

Mark: Well, when I took over my family's business, I actually did learn the program very badly just to get that fired up because it's such a specialized product that we were selling. There was no standard core options out there and I didn't understand how easily accessible outsourcing was at that particular time.

What really got me into outsourcing was right around 2008 when my twins were born. They had meningitis and so my wife and I were in the hospital constantly for a little over a month, and it really took me out of the day to day of running my business and I realized that I couldn't let myself get in that situation again. I had to build more of a system so that things could be handled whether or not I was actually in the office. I still have to deal with major issues and things like that. But, as far as running the daily operations of business and processing orders, answering customer questions, I found out about this whole huge subculture of outsourcing and it was really a revelation because I realized I didn't have to learn all these different programming languages and I didn't have to actually do the designs for our website. All of those things, I could do but it took me far too long and I didn't enjoy those types of things. And so, what I found was, you can just buy an off-the-shelf monthly shopping cart type deal and most of those are open source to the effect that you can modify the system to actually do more of the things that you like it to do. And so, for example, PHP is a programming language that's very common, it's open source. You can find a million different programmers that's all over the world that are very, very skilled in PHP and MySQL which is a database. All that mean is, instead of myself having to go in and learn that and spend the time to actually do it. You can just get incredible prices to do some very complex things that won't customize it in your shop. And, in addition, one thing that I really want to get away from was the customer service. And so, I found several virtual assistants. Each of them has different talents like doing different types of tasks and they're really good

with customers. Some are really good at very explicit task, like adding products to the website or processing other things that can be very specifically defined. And so, I'll have two or three different ones that do different things for me on an ongoing basis. And if there's no work, they don't get paid so it's a flexible arrangement in my way that if I have work for them, which I typically always do, they're there for me. If I don't have work maybe for a week or two, we're up to date on different things, then that becomes a variable cost to me than having a lot of overhead every single month. Perhaps, it feels so much just to pay for my overhead because the number one thing that I wanted to do when I built these businesses was I didn't have any full-time employees because I have full-time employees in my other business and it just takes too much time in management. It was more of a relaxed kind of decision, and I wanted to be able to outsource everything as I needed it versus having a bunch of people and salary that will add to my stress level having them monthly. So, this has allowed me to do that just through using outsourcing sites like ScriptLance, ELance, oDesk is a great one I've come about, and it's outstanding. If I wanted to go out and build an iPad app tomorrow knowing absolutely nothing about iPad apps, I could go out there and get a bit from probably 20 of the best iPad developers in the entire world and the price would just be astronomically lower than it would be if I got it developed here but especially if I tried to learn that myself and do it. And, it's going to be better quality and they're going to be able to tell you the exact way to do things, so you don't waste time spending doing things incorrectly.

Jim: Yeah, let me talk about outsourcing for just a minute. I mean, as you well know, you've heard me talk about it frequently. I run several million dollar business annually in total sales. I have no employees. I have some people who work for me part-time and they've got other commitments, actually, quite a few of them. I've got several outsourced workers, but it's way easier to manage that.

I work from home. I've got a little office at home. That's where I put my whole everything. I do this running from home. I've got a little office that some people go to help me run my eBay business everyday but I'm in there like once every three weeks just to drop something off or pick something up. I don't even see the stuff, but that's how I run business as well. I want something that runs by itself.

So, in grained and everything I teach and then everything I do when I'm teaching people new systems on this call, that's why I'm so excited about what you're doing, Mark. That just resonates with people. I don't want to have employees and worry about vacation days and sick days and all the legal and tax

ramifications of having employees. I just pay them on contract, I pay them hourly, they pay their own taxes, and I've got outsourced workers.

I want to talk a little about in the Philippines, for just a few dollars per hour, they speak English; they speak great English. They're very skilled. They've college education in many cases and the beautiful thing is, the U.S. dollar goes so far there that me paying them \$3 or \$4 an hour is the equivalent of paying somebody 5 or 10 times that much here in the United States, and I get great results. And even if you have to pay them when they're not working, it's not a whole lot of money out of pocket for me to hire a full-time \$400 a month, let's say. They're on call. They're at my back and can call whenever I need anything. They get it done. It's 400 bucks a month.

Mark: Absolutely.

Jim: And they're doing the work of \$80,000/ year employee if I were to hire them here in the U.S.

Mark: Absolutely.

Jim: You can't beat that.

Mark: Yeah.

Jim: You can build serious businesses around these kinds of concepts, and that's exactly what you've done and you're living proof that it does work. So, I'm so excited to hear this model as you're spelling it out.

Mark: And, one great thing about it --

Jim: Well, let's --

Mark: One great thing about --

Jim: Go ahead.

Mark: -- back in the Philippines as well, and you've probably found this out as well, they seem to be very loyal.

Jim: Yes.

Mark: So if they're very loyal and it sets a lot of them to have an American employer and so, as long as you treat them well, they'll treat you very well. And, I found them to be very extremely loyal and you know, that means a lot. You want employees that feels like you're looking out for their best interest, and it should be mutually beneficial arrangement and that's why I always try to do it. Just like you said, for \$400 a month for some of these people for the amount of work that they can get done and the flexibility of many of them to do a variety of different task is just incredible value.

Jim: Yes, I completely agree. At OfflineBiz.com, we talk a lot about outsourcing and how to find a good outsource worker and if you're not a part of OfflineBiz.com, that's a good place to go to learn. Let's see, I've got a link here I'm pulling up right now. I'm making sure I'm giving people the right link. Well, if you just over there, John Jonas is our resident expert on all things outsourcing, so jump over to offlinebiz.com if you want to learn more about outsourcing. But, that's not really the main point of this call but it's kind of the foundational concept that allows you to have these dozens and dozens of active sites all taking orders every day, and you're able to get on the phone and enjoy your young family and twin boys. Wow, that's got to be just an ongoing constant source of entertainment and challenge as well. I've actually got a couple of boys that are about the same age and one of them is adopted though. And it was boys you said, right, your twins?

Mark: Yeah, all three boys.

Jim: Yeah, all boys. You see, I've got four boys and then a little girl so just having the flexibility to enjoy your family and to be able to get out and do things and to be able to drop everything on a nice sunny day and go to the zoo or whatever. I mean, that's priceless. Even after nearly a decade of enjoying that lifestyle, it still doesn't get old or boring. I still wake up every day and I'm just so grateful. I don't have to go in and make someone else's money working for a boss. Just every day, I'm grateful.

Mark: Absolutely. And, I credit my father for helping me just take the leap. You know, his health was failing and I was kind of forced in a way to come back and kind of save the family business but it's been the most wonderful blessing in my life to be able to spend time with my family. I'm just incredibly involved with my kids every single day. I drop off my boy and get into the office at about 7:45 and I work till about 3:00, go to the gym, go home and I spend two or three hours every single day, a lot of time outside, doing things with my kids and my wife. It's just been -- had that not happened for circumstances in life, I don't know if I ever would have done it but it's just been a huge blessing to me and I love it. I love learning.

Jim: It's interesting to me how life has kind of forced you down these paths and this happen so often. You're getting these good little ideas from the Internet and you're reading my newsletter, maybe another membership site or another discussion forum here and there and you've got them in the back of your head but life just hasn't forced you to make that little leap. And, God bless the person who can say, "You know what? I'm going to make the leap before I have to." That's a rare individual. But a lot of times, like you said, your dad was getting sick and it kind of pushed you down this road. And then, you had your twins and they had, you said, meningitis, right, so you're in the hospital and you had to outsource, which is how John Jonas got into outsourcing too. He's my personal expert for all the things outsourcing and he was forced into it, initially, because his wife was on several months of bed rest and very sick with their child. He's like, "You know what? I get to let someone else run my business." What's the best way to do that? He discovered outsourcing and became one of the world's experts on the topic now, and I refer to him all the time to teach me things and help me find good workers and he's one of our resident experts at OfflineBiz. That life has kind of forced us all in those directions but wouldn't it be great if people could just flip a switch in their head and go, "You know what? I'm going to pretend as if it all matters very much right now for me to make really good decisions and just go down this road full speed as if I had to." That's a big key to success – focused effort as if your life depended on it almost, as if your family depended on it but really, but reality, they do. They're just so little security out there. But, you've got all these websites each producing, I'm sure, different amounts of income for you, that's truly diversified income better than any investment you could've made.

Mark: Right.

Jim: What a great position to be in. What a beautiful position to be in.

Mark: And, that's beyond to look at these types of sites. I mean, we'll talk about this a little later on how you can actually -- there's virtually very little to no risk and that you can get a return like 360% over just a year return on the small amount of money that you invest in each of these sites and be the ultimate in diversification because you're going after such divergent and separate markets. They're totally different niche markets that have different market characteristics in different times of the year that they peak and bottom out. And so, over time, you can build a portfolio of different businesses that go against whatever is going on in the economy and they perform highly regardless of what your other markets might be doing. You always have a few sites that are growing and expanding regardless of what's going on the U.S. or international markets. So, I'm looking to invest even more in these types of businesses because just looking at a strict return on investment standpoint, there's absolutely nothing out there that would give you a quicker return over a shorter period of time than these types of sites, and I'll explain more about that a little bit later.

Jim: Cool. You're talking about investing and I love that word. Investing, for reason in our culture, has a perception. Everyone has a perception that it's some kind of passive activity where you write a check and hand it to somebody, then a little while later, you get back a bigger check and you've really done nothing and it's just passive activity. And, at its root, that's what capitalism is. Someone provides the capital for a project and the person performs the project and then more capital comes back later.

But, the true opportunities right now, I believe, in the economy that we're in are for those willing to do a little bit of the work themselves, apply a little bit of the knowledge themselves, invest in their own business and then get the return back. So, use your capital to invest in your own business, and we're not talking about writing huge checks here, nothing I've ever taught to anyone for business success that involves someone writing a big check and then crossing their fingers. I'm all about little tiny investments that pay off in a huge way, so you hear more evidence when you talk about these big returns. If you're spending well under \$100 to get a big project launched and even if it goes horribly, you're going to get your money back. And, you can launch more of this as many of them as you want to and why wouldn't you?

Mark: Absolutely.

Jim: It's so much better. If you put your money in a 401K or some other kind of traditional investment, you can lose money there. Here, the odds of losing long term are non-existent. You can't lose once you have a few key things in

place and that's what I love about your system as well, you know how to identify those good niche markets.

Mark: That's right.

Jim: But, could you train us a little bit on how you find good niche markets? You don't have share the ones you're in necessarily but how have you identified it? I mean, you talked about fees a little bit.

Mark: Sure. Well, niche marketing now in its essence is so in very specialized types of products that is ideally hard to find locally, and there's these small groups of people and when I say small, they're maybe several million around the world. But, you're trying to find very specific niches that the big boys basically overlook. So for example, Wal-Mart or Best Buy would never go after these types of markets because it's just generally too small for them. And, the great thing about these types of markets is these people are typically starving for someone to come out and serve them. They have money, they're willing to spend, they're easily findable online, and you can provide actually the products or services or variety of different things that they tell you they want. And then, you sell that to them and you can build a very profitable business in a very small niche. I was just looking the other day just for some examples that were kind off the wall in some niche markets. About a year or so, my son, Jake, was really into Billy the Exterminator which is a show. I think it's on A&E and he's an exterminator always finding snakes, and I don't like snakes particularly but we were in the snakes for a period. And so, I just thought, well, let's see if there's snake tongs for sale online, and these are basically just metal things that snake handlers and people use to handle snakes and there's professional Greg(ph) and there's different options and things. And so, I looked and there's a site called tongs.com, t-o-n-g-s dot com, and so all they do is sell snake handling equipment. So tongs, and then they had these little curved bars that they use to keep their heads away from them and a variety of different things.

And then, we have a local Repticon (Reptiles) show here but originally that this was a multipurpose center. We went there and there was this huge subculture of snake lovers and reptile lovers. They had any kind of lizard or snake that you could bring up and I'm walking by the booth, I'm always looking for something that's unique and I didn't even know exists. And there was one booth and it was from micedirect.com, m-i-c-e-d-i-r-e-c-t dot com and what they do is they target, not only snake lovers but they target people who own very large snakes like pythons and I guess, anacondas or whatever other kinds of snakes that are large and they breed mice to be used as food for these larger snakes. And so, what

they do is they aim is you can be assured that these are healthy mice your snake is not going to get sick or anything. And they freeze them and then they send them overnight out to people all over the world so they don't have to worry about growing their own mice. I don't know how you will get them; I guess, you can go in to your local pet supply store. So, as small as that, they have probably several hundred thousand dollars a year that they're making because they're so targeted.

Another one was shuffleboard equipment and I don't know why I thought of shuffleboard, I've never played it in my life but there's a site called ShuffleboardFederation.com. Now, if that's not a small niche, then I don't know what it is. And then potato gun supplies, Russell Brunson has a video wherein it has how make potato gun site. So, I just list other parts out there where you can go buy it. If you go to spudtec.com, s-p-u-d-t-e-c dot com, there's a company and they sell supplies to make your own potato gun. So, you put hairspray basically in a specially made PVC pipe and you line it with some kind of sheets of potato.

Jim: Oh, yeah. My dad has made those and played with my kids. You can shoot the potato several hundred yards with one of those bad boys. It's fun.

Mark: Yeah, exactly.

Jim: It's an unlimited little niche markets that you can get into. It's got to be fun just to even flip through a magazine that you would never read and just be looking for little ideas.

Mark: Oh, absolutely.

Jim: There are all kinds of ways that you can stimulate your brain and find other ideas.

Mark: Well, here's some great ways where you can get an idea of niches and ideally, just look around and pay attention. When you go into the mall, look at special products that you see in the mall or keep your eyes open on late night TV, there's all kinds of different products that come but I like to go to magazines.com. If there's magazine on the topic, chances are, it has a big enough group to market to that they're also congregating online where you can

reach them. You can go to Amazon. It's a great place, of course, where you can find large variety of different products, basically any kind of product that you can imagine. But, there's a book or multiple books ideally on a particular product or niche market. That's a good sign as well.

And when you get a list of, you know, 3 to 10 different markets that you think you might be interested in, then just go to Google and type in keywords that relate to that particular market and looking to see if there's anyone advertising in the Pay Per Click listing. So as you know, the Pay Per Click listings, they are both at the top of these pages and also on the right-hand side. If there aren't any ads there, then you need to be more specific on your search because if there's no one advertising, then probably not many people are making money from that particular term.

So you want to find a market that had number one, a hungry market that's easily identifiable. Maybe there's a mailing list that you can actually email to them or direct mail to them. And, you want to make sure that there's competition, and that's a little counterintuitive but you always want to make sure that there's competition because as much as people would like to think that what they have is unique, many times, there's not much that's new under sun; it's just how well it's been marketed. So if you saw other people selling similar products or even the exact same products that is a good thing. Don't cut that niche out just because there's other that's selling that product because you'll always find that. And what you do --

Jim: That's a great point. I just want to re-emphasize what you've said, restating what you very clearly said, but the Internet is not the place, I call it the inventor mentality. You won't make it as an inventor of a brand new well-I-never-hard-that-before concept on the Internet. You just won't. The opportunities are in the places where people were already looking. You want to get in front of those ways which means there's someone already selling that stuff. When someone presents me an idea and they say, "Jim, I don't think anyone has ever thought of this before. I think we should try selling this product that no one has ever heard of before," that is a very hard thing to sell on Internet and I have those conversations with people all the time. It doesn't matter how neat the invention is, if there's no one out there selling it yet, you've got an uphill battle.

Mark: Yes.

Jim: I completely agree the low-hanging fruit is where things are already moving. But not in, and I think you'd agree with this, not the stuff that's flying off the shelf at Wal-Mart or a Target are popular but you're talking about, like you said, the sub-niche stuff. It's popular but not popular enough to be on the shelf at Wal-Mart.

Mark: Absolutely. And there are many reasons why you don't want to sell things like that. Number one, there's no reason to compete with the mass merchandisers. For example, if you're selling an iron, for example, there's absolutely no way that you can match the marketing dollars that a Wal-Mart could put behind something like a generic product like an iron. You can also go to probably hundred stores around your local area and get that. What you need is something that's very difficult to find locally and very unique and very specialized. In that way, you basically go on whether or not and there's still a tremendous amount of business out there, these bigger guys just don't have the ability to move this quickly as you do. And then, you can basically become the recognized authority or the brand in that particular space for that type of product, so it's easier to manage your site because you have fewer products typically.

You know, some of my sites have 3,000-plus products. But you can build a very profitable site with just a handful of products that are -- the copyrighting is well done. You've put together an offer that makes your product very different from all the other people selling the same type of product. You want to look at the tough guys, so when you go out and do the search for all other products that you won't be selling in goodwill.

Go on and look at these competitor sites and critically analyze what they're doing right and what they're doing wrong and try to find an angle where you can be better. It might just be clearly describing some of the benefits that they get as well from other sites but maybe they're not clearly noted. Like for example, on one site, there's probably 5,000 people that sell this same product from this same exact dropshippers and these are fans. Well, one of the things that the dropshipper provides is full hanging hardware and step-by-step instructions. And so, many of the sites don't clearly emphasize the benefit of that so you want to note that in your copy that you're writing on your products that all these different things that are benefits to the person from buying from you, you want to make it basically an offer where it's not easy to compare your product with that product from another site because you've added so much value for them.

Jim: Yes. You've added in and maybe it's even a special video or whatever that they get access to or some training or whatever you can do to increase the perceived value or even just, like you said, specifically spelling out everything they're going to get when maybe some competitors are just selling the basic products without listing what's in the box.

Mark: Right.

Jim: It could be that simple but yes, you make it hard to compare. You distinguish yourself that way and that's great advice. And that applies to anything, I mean, even on eBay when you're selling the same thing that hundred other people are, you can distinguish yourself by giving a lot of specific benefit detail.

Mark: Absolutely.

Jim: Well, let's talk about -- you mentioned earlier on, I want to re-emphasize, with dozens, if not over a hundred of these sites now, you are certainly not an expert in each of these niche markets. You said have other people helping you with customer support and that sort of thing. Do you have 800 phone numbers list in any of your site? Is that something you've used? Do you have people answering the phone on any of these and how helpful that work?

Mark: It varies. As a general rule, if you have the availability to take calls, you'll always make more sales and it's a wonderful thing to also have phone support. With that being said, I made lifestyle choice that I don't want the constant interruptions and I don't really want to manage someone answering or multiple people, in this case, answering the phone all the time. So, what we do is the simplest approach is to get a 1-800 number from Kall8.com or from like RingCentral or somewhere like that. They're very inexpensive, you know, \$115 a month.

And, what we do is we record a professional greeting in different places where you can have it. We also kind of a voicemail greeting and basically, it prompt the person that we're busy at the current moment, "We love to call you back if you will just leave your name and number. We'll call you back within say, an hour or two hours," sometimes we don't specify but always try to get back with them in two hours. And so, what happen is they leave their message and then that's automatically forwarded through email to myself and to a group of my virtual

assistants who handle that for me. And so, what they do if it's a question that I can answer only, then I do that. If it's a question that is for the dropshipper, maybe it's a technical question that we don't know, they will facilitate the interaction with the dropshipper to get the question answered, get back with the customer, and then only when it's necessary do I become involved. So, most of the things are I want to place an order over the phone, I don't want to do it over the Internet, for example.

And so, they can easily just call them back, take the order and that's in where I design the stuff what I was doing. I'm doing just a large variety of different things during the day and it would mess up my flow when I'm just not interested in that. So, it's way to patch activities in different groups at times. So for example, once a day or twice a day, we might say, okay, we're going to return all these phone calls at this onetime and then we can match up other activities and maybe we're updating the website and maybe we're doing some link building or traffic generation things. We can match those activities up and manage them in a way that works for us, not us working in a way that the calls dictate it because if you don't get a handle on your customer service to start off with, it can become overwhelming if you're not prepared for it so this is a simple way to handle that. Everything is automated, they take the message, forward it to email, and then you can handle it on your own schedule.

Jim: That's fantastic. I'm learning as we go here. And I just have, I don't know, maybe this is some advice you've considered and maybe it's something that you haven't considered, but I would thinking if I'm setting this up for dozen of websites; I might consider having press one if you need to place an order right now, press two for any other inquiry. And if they press two, they're going to generate an email and someone will get back to them very quickly like you've just described. But if they press one, you do have someone actually standing by live and ready to take orders because I would think you have some drop off.

Mark: Right.

Jim: If they do it just sending you an email in three hours later, you try to call them back to get the order, etc. and it's for like a five-dollar item, you're wasting everybody's time.

Mark: Right.

Jim: Have you experiment with that all?

Mark: I have, and we actually do that exact thing on some of our higher-dollar volume sites. So, if I'm selling things that are 800-dollar margin versus 20-dollar margin, then that's what happens.

Jim: Right.

Mark: We just usually direct them straight to a VA and that's their priority over everything. They drop everything and then take that call. The lower volume ones where your margin might be \$20 or \$40 or under, it's always good to take that call but you got to get into a cost benefit analysis because many times --

Jim: Right.

Mark: -- we might end up losing money on the deal if you're dropping everything you do at the moment to return those calls or answer that call.

Jim: Exactly. You got to watch it. But, the nice is it's so inexpensive now as we're talking about these tools people need. Ten years ago, if you would've talked about setting up a phone system, you had to bring an expert consultant to talk to you about your options and you better be ready to write a 10,000 or 20,000-dollar check and they're going to program it, etc. Now, those websites, I like to rely over Twilio. I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing it correctly but t-w-i-l-i-o dot com if you heard of them.

Mark: I have heard of them.

Jim: It's an open source code, very easy. Anybody can go in there as a greenie as you want to be and you can set up an 800 number in a couple of minutes and have it directed and routed however you want, and it's just a few bucks a month and it charge you a few pennies kind of like Skype. It's per-use charge in all of this stuff. And you can have things routed and forwarded and voice mailboxes and turn into emails and SMS messages and just all the technology just laid out there point and click simple for you to use and they're charging you as you use it to do all this stuff we're describing. There are services out there so don't be intimidated by that piece of it, and even if you still are, there are people that can help you set these things up. There's great discussion forums and I know we're

going to offer people some options here at the end of this call as well on how they can get more information and learn from you in a continuing fashion on how to do all this, but no piece of this is complicated.

At no point did you have to go out and study for a year on how to try to figure out the intricate details of this. You've got people who can do this stuff for you. When you run into wall, you go to a discussion forum where people hang out and talk about this stuff and you ask a few question to get your answer and you proceed. It's not rocket science. You don't need a degree or a college education; you don't even probably need a high school education to be able to do 98% of this stuff. These are basic math at some point maybe. But I just love the simplicity of this business model so far.

And something else too I want to talk about before we kind of start getting into our closing thoughts here and some tips for folks, I think from a search engine standpoint, I've made the observation that it's getting harder. Search engine optimization, as an art and as a skill, is getting more difficult especially when you're going after the big names. There are just so many people playing in the game now. But, if you want to be the top ranked site, for example, on the search term "credit cards", you got 50,000 people specifically dedicated to, committed to competing with you for top search place online. It doesn't matter what techniques or strategies or tactics you're using, odds are you're going to fail because there are just so many people out there; there's affiliate marketers, there's people actually in the credit card business, there's these scammers and everyone else trying to do it. You're not going to get it. So, get into these smaller inch wide, mile deep markets though like we're talking about, these strange niche markets, how to build a potato gun and play with your kids in the backyard with a potato gun and all the supplies that you need to be able to shoot a potato at 300 yards. Sure, there are some other people doing it but if you apply some basic search engine optimization, you're going to be at the top, and those 500 people or so a month that search for that around the world, you're going to be right there on page one. And, what is your experience then with search engine optimization? How hard has it been to get your sites ranked? What kind of work goes in to that on an ongoing basis just in real general terms? Is that a point of intimidation for someone new getting into this?

Mark: No, it shouldn't be and the reason being, just like you said, you're going after such a specialized type of product. For example, I use to sell hard top pool table covers. Did I know anything about pool other than playing it when I was a kid or whatever now? Absolutely, nothing. Well, it turns out there's different models for each brand of table and there's different sizes so if I'm trying to rank for ones with hard pool table cover, that's not going to be very hard for me to

rank for versus trying to rank for something like, as you said, credit card where it's so generic and the person who's typing that, you don't know if they're coming to set up an application for a credit card, if they're looking for information on comparing rates. You don't know what they are.

If someone types in something as specific as ones with hard pool table cover, you know that's probably what they're looking to buy. And so, you just make it very simple to place the order and you have a good picture. Basically, from just getting a few high quality links from a few different sites like Squidoo or you can do Twitter links, you can do HubPages or submit articles; those one of the very simplistic first day kind of link building that you can do to help you get ranked for those very specific keywords. And then, again, you're going where the competition is. You're going after these small markets that people aren't paying any attention to, these large retailers. And so, if you just did one week, if you just maybe concentrated for an hour or two trying to get some link to certain pages that are these long tail, long tail meaning very specific types of products, then you're going to win and you're going to get multiple first page rankings and even number one ranking. And overtime, that will kind of snow ball and you'll find as you have more and more pages ranked, that helps you to get other of your pages ranked more highly as well so none of this, as you said, should be overwhelming if you don't have any technical background at all. There are different resources and forums. And then, these shopping carts, they've made it so easy now to start a store that they worry about all the technology and all of these little intricacies whereas when I built our first site from our family business in 2002, I had to learn everything myself and custom program and it was just unbearable. I didn't enjoy it and it took me hundreds of hours.

Nowadays, you can go out there for most products. These shopping carts will always fit exactly on what you're trying to do. They're search engine optimized out of the box and you just take a little bit of training in learning how to sell that product correctly. And you're on your way, so none of these should feel overwhelming because it's very simple in the day-to-day business and you can definitely do it. If you can use a web browser and send email, you can use this business.

Affiliate marketing vs. eCommerce sites

Jim: Well, let me talk about, and this is again for maybe the advanced person listening on here right now. The question is: ***why wouldn't I just set up affiliate marketing sites versus niche market site? I could be selling basically the same product but it's "easier". I'm getting a commission***

from each sale instead of being responsible for making sure the product gets shipped through a dropshipper right? Does that question make sense to you? I know how I would answer it and I know why.

Personally, I'm much more excited about the e-commerce site model that you're describing here than I am about building affiliate websites which unfortunately, for some reason, ***there's a lot of experts and viewers in the world making a ton of money, by the way, not by setting up affiliate sites but by teaching people how to set up affiliate sites.*** (NOTE: The failure rate is abysmal for those in "affiliate marketing".) And, because there's this perception that, "Wow, I can just set it up and walk away and never have any responsibility and I just make all this money, this is awesome, I'm going to try that." But from your perspective, what's the difference between those two business models?

I think there's a huge difference but what comes to mind when I present that to you, ***affiliate marketing versus actually a niche market where you're site is delivering real goods?***

Mark: Number one is control. Affiliate products, definitely you can go out just like a bank and have the information products sell immediately. However, there are a few different problems with that. Number one, even though you know you can control where the traffic is by redirecting through URLs and different things like that, there could come a time when that particular affiliate product that you're making a lot of money selling it and they just say, "Okay, we're pulling the product off the market," or they may be able to catch you out in some way (affiliate fraud is a HUGE problem). At that point, unless you have a similar product that you can sell to those same people, you can also get that revenue stream. And, affiliate marketing for many people, as simple as it is in its concept, it's confusing. What's great about this is that everyone understands how to buy a physical product over the Internet. Amazon has already educated the entire world on how that process works and it's easy to understand. When someone asks you what you're doing, you can say, "I sell medieval swords," for example. It's an easy concept to understand, it can be highly leveraged through the use of outsourced parties and things like that, and it allows you to have the ultimate control even though you may not be stocking the products here locally.

If, for example, one of your dropshippers decided that they didn't want to do it with you anymore, well, there's usually, at least 2 to 5 to 10 more that do sell the same exact types of products that you could then go to and not miss a step, and that's what I traditionally recommend as well. I always want to have at least two sources for a particular site that I'm running; the fewer, the better but you definitely own at least and not one. In that way, in case anything happens with

your supply line, you always have a backup. And, they're basically any product that you can imagine that can be dropshipped. There's always going to be multiple suppliers in that market, so take that into consideration when you're considering doing affiliate marketing versus building an e-commerce site. And if that's the case, you usually buy the fellow affiliate products through your e-commerce site. It's your site.

Jim: Sure.

Mark: It's selling anything that you want.

Jim: Do what you want, absolutely. **There's a very specific reason I'm more excited about e-commerce sites where you actually selling a physical good, even if you're not shipping it from your garage, which I think is crazy, never do that. You don't have to store it in your garage.** You don't have to see the package. My model actually, Mark, is never touch box tape when it comes to Internet business, also all kinds of physical goods. But, I don't ever want to touch box tape. If I'm touching box tape, I'm doing something wrong. Someone else has that job, and the goods never show up in a big pile in my house either.

But, **here's the reason I'm more excited about e-commerce rather than affiliate sites. There are some big trends here. Google does not necessarily like affiliate marketers (some would disagree, but I think the trend is undeniable). Google doesn't need them and they don't like them a whole lot behind closed doors. From Google's perspective an affiliate marketer doesn't contribute new content to the Internet. As a result an affiliate marketing focused site is harder to rank. All you have to do is go to some Internet marketing conference and you're not going to meet a bunch of people who are all excited about Internet marketing because they are "making money". What you're going to meet is affiliate marketing "teachers" and a bunch of confused and frustrated "students" that aren't making any significant money yet. The failure rate is horrible. You are going to meet a bunch of people who are trying to figure it out, along with a bunch of people who had success at one time and now, they're really struggling.** And, everyone agrees that affiliate marketing is getting harder and harder to do. The only people who *won't tell you* that are the people selling a system, teaching you to set up a pretty website and use affiliate marketing and that gets you all excited because now you've got your pretty website, but how much money are you making? A few bucks a month at the end of the day. That's the norm. *It's hard*

to get into because it's getting harder and harder to rank on Google as an affiliate marketer. And, the competition is just thick. The number of people who start trying to get into affiliate marketing, all these newbies just flood the market, the Pay Per Click ads, the people are paying way too much trying to drive traffic to their affiliate sites, it just flood everything out. *But, when you talk about these inch wide, mile deep niche markets in e-commerce, the competition is much more your traditional legitimate business out there.* You got a handful of competitors maybe and if you do a few things right, Google is going to like you. They're going to reward you and position you well in the search engines, and they're going to see that there's no affiliate links on the site. They don't reward affiliate links. Google does not bump you up in the ranks when they see affiliate links. Whatever the most popular affiliate programs are out there, they know which ones those are and they see links pointing to affiliate locations. They do not reward that. There's no expert out there that would disagree with me on that. There's no reward in including affiliate link. But if you include a legitimate product that's got some buzz and other expert sites pointing to it, you can raise in the ranks very, very quickly.

So that's kind of my best attempt for a short answer on why I'm more excited about e-commerce sites than affiliate sites. And, I think the future trend is playing out a year, two years, five years from now, it will be even stronger where affiliate marketers will really be phasing out at that point. That's kind of my thought. It's going to be a game only played by the big boys and true experts in the industry and the little guys are going to have a hard time competing, but the e-commerce sites could be very established, so you can have many, many of them doing very, very well. I feel that. I know people who are making money with affiliate marketing and doing it in a very different way by having a large loyal audience. I'm still all for that but building affiliate site, I'm not that excited about it, and I'm excited about the way you've done things.

Well, let's move on from that topic and get back down to some real grass root stuff that people can use and maybe some tips and things that you've picked along the way. Someone's thinking about the stuff, "Yeah, I think I might want to try this." We'll give them some advice on where they can get started and get some site set up, get into this business without making any huge investment. So give us some tricks and techniques that you've used to kind of dominate when you set your sites up and some things you've learned along the way.

Mark: Absolutely. Well, one thing that I've done, and you've noticed all over the Internet, free shipping is kind of expected by now. Well, I started doing through this and I was trying to decide if I was going to offer free shipping on some of my sites and even though some of my competitors were offering it for

this particular product line, it was \$35 to \$75 basically for the shipping. So, I wasn't really comfortable with just giving free shipping to the customers and not getting anything in return. I wanted something of value back from them that will help me build my business. And so, what I came up with, and there's a few different parts to it but basically, I set up advertisement all over my site, get free shipping above this certain amount, so you need to specify what amount that was. On this site, it was \$150. And then, as they added products into the cart, you see it many times like on Amazon, if you like to get free shipping on this order, you need to add so much to your order and so entice them to add more to their cart which gets your average cart value up definitely. But then, when they added the amount needed to get the free shipping, I didn't automatically give them the free shipping what like most sites do. What I want to do was to force them to actually type in a code and I didn't have to code it all. I basically say, "Congratulations, your order qualifies for free shipping. To get that, enter this code." And, the promo code box is right below it at the bottom of the page easy to see, and I was astounded at how many people didn't put in the code and it was just astounding to me. And, I wanted to just see if they would take the action to actually put the code in there because I didn't want to just give away this free shipping if the person didn't actually value that and taking enough time to actually do it themselves. So what I found was about 50% of the people did not enter code to get the free shipping and so, the order went through --

Jim: Wow. So, you offer them the free shipping, you give them the code to get free shipping but when it comes down to time and place they order and they don't enter the code, so you don't have to give them free shipping. That's incredible.

Mark: And, the beauty is that you can capitalize on that benefit, so you're being very honest. You're advertising it all over your site, you're trying to get them to take action, and then all you do in that scenario is just ask them to take the steps to put it in. So basically, 40% to 50% will find and they'll enter it.

Jim: Right.

Mark: And sometimes, you have people that come back and say, "Hey, I see you offer some free shipping and I didn't get it," and all I do is I say, "Yes, I'd be glad to give you free shipping, I'll just credit down your order and that's it."

Jim: Okay.

Mark: But that's probably less than 10% of the people.

Jim: Yeah.

Mark: So, that's a beautiful thing.

Jim: Brilliant. Yes, that's brilliant. A lot of people, they'll be attracted to your site because you offer free shipping but after that, they don't really follow the steps. They don't follow the instructions to get the free shipping so they don't get it. I like that. It's very creative.

Mark: And part two of that, in addition to when I'm figuring out the actual price of my products, my products are priced higher than most of my competitors because I build so much value in the way that I merchandise. But, I basically take the calls from the wholesaler then I add in one that would actually cost me to ship that, so I already know that and have that built into the product. And so, that shipping has already built in to the products regardless of whether or not they actually choose to use the free shipping or not so my margin is always maintained, which is a great thing because as you get into it, you really have to be careful on the law with the smaller dollar volume purchases because free shipping, 10-dollar free shipping on a 20 or 30-dollar product or even on 100-dollar product, that's going to eat up a lot of your margin even that credit card fee, merchant card fee, all these things you may not think about. And so, you have to be true that you merchandise in a way that builds credibility and it builds benefit so that you can charge a little bit higher price than your competitors.

Another thing that I did was, I had a new site and I wanted to build up a list of testimonials. And so, I also free ship in all throughout the site but you can have any criteria that you want to offer free shipping. You can say, "I need you to call me at this number and let me record an interview with you if you want it for example, and I'll give you a free shipping." But while on the site, what I want to do is as I get to the shopping cart, there's a little box that says, "We'd love to give you free shipping. If you would love to know how we're doing, if you could send us a testimonial and when we get that, we'll issue a credit a shipping back to your cart." So, they go ahead and process the order. And then, when we get that testimonial, we don't say that it has to be positive or anything like that; we just want their honest opinion of how they would like doing business with us, how we could improve those kind of things because it gives us more information that we can use to better our site.

Jim: Right.

Mark: And so, you could say, "I'd like to be able to use your name, your city, what business you're in, I'd love to have a testimonial, and I'd even love to have a picture of the product maybe on your wall or in your room," because it builds that social --

Jim: Social proof, sure.

Mark: -- social proof, right. So that's really helpful. Just keep in mind that any special that you offer on your site like free shipping, don't just give it away. It has a lot of value and it has a lot of value if you're bargaining shipping.

Jim: Yeah. You know, I think it's maybe an idea too. Maybe ask people, "Hey, like us on Facebook for free shipping and we'll give you a code there."

Mark: Absolutely.

Jim: And you send them over to a page on Facebook where they have to click the "Like" button and then a code is revealed and that's super simple to set up. Please don't let anyone listening to this be intimidated by the technology behind setting this up.

I have no idea how the technology behind any of this works, nor am I interested in setting it up but it's very easy to do. You can spend a couple of dollars and have someone else do it. There's tools all over the place to set up a Facebook like page and have it reveal either a special report or a free downloadable whatever. I set one of those up last week myself using a tool I have, and you can have someone else do it for you entirely if you want, so don't be intimidated by these ideas but just put them in your brain as -- if you're taking notes, hey, these are some good ideas, and Mark has tons of these ideas. He's got bunch of these sites.

And something I'm excited about too is Mark has agreed on My Silent Team, which he happen to be a member there and there's other ways to work with Mark here in just a minute. We're going to tell you about that he's agreed to be an expert at My Silent Team to help us if anyone has questions about e-commerce sites, in this interview, and you can ping us and we'll give you here

really soon just a couple of minutes another way you can work with them as well so stay tuned. But, don't be intimidated by any of this is the main point I'm making right now. There's plenty of help there, there's straightforward answers to any questions you have. Share us a little work but it's very worth it so go for the steps and set this stuff up.

So you'd mention to me that you had a way to make money even when there's an abandoned cart.

Mark: Yes.

Jim: Like if someone fills a shopping cart with eight items and then they start to check out wherein they changed their mind and you called it the creative way to make money on that, what was that about?

Mark: Absolutely. It's called the automated abandon cart closer. And so, I started looking at some of the statistics on some of my sites and I just set up what's called funnels in Google Analytics basically, where you can say when a person gets to this page, show me where I'm losing people so maybe it might be the product page, the order page, the page two of the order page to the final order confirmation page. I want to see where I was losing people, so I could improve that. And, what I found was, there were a lot of people that were adding items into the cart and for some reason, they would go away and not complete their order. Well, it might be the shipping price or it might be the actual price of the product or it might be a variety of different things. Think about it when you're at home at night and your kids come in there and you're in the middle of trying to order something and you get into something else, "Honey, come and do this and do that." And so, you might just have every intention on ordering but something else got in the way and then, you get back into your daily routine and you forget about it. Well, I didn't want that to happen. And so, what I did was, I implemented what's called a two-step order page. The first page is let me have your contact information, which includes your email address and then submit to the next page. And when I had it done, and this is not a difficult thing to do, all shopping carts pretty much store data in a similar way. They basically create a record in the database that says, okay, this order number had these products attached to it and you can create a unique URL to go back to that shopping cart. So, what I had a programmer do is basically, it would go out and there are things that you can set up in your C-panel of your webhosting account. I'm sorry if it awfully sounds technical, it's really not. You can set up what's called a cron job where you can automatically run a script every so often. So for example, in this one, I had it set up to run every hour.

So, every hour, it would set up, it would run the script, it would basically check to see where were all the abandoned carts and it had an email address already for that person so it would send a very simple informal email.

And, this is what it says in there. It says, "Hello, [name]. I hope you're having a good one. My name is [x] and I'm the customer care representative at [website name]. I noticed you've added some products to your cart but not been able to complete your checkout. We're currently having some updates in our website and checkout process and we just want to make sure that you weren't having any technical issues. If you like to continue with your previous cart, you can just click the link below or call us at blah-blah-blah. We appreciate your business and we're always here to help. If you should have any questions or need assistance, please let me know. Have a blessed day. Julie," which is one of my virtual assistants. And, that email is just automatically sent out to those people and that's it.

Jim: That's beautiful.

Mark: You'll find 10% to 25% of those people; they come back because you made it very easy. If they're uneasy about ordering online, they can call you directly. And then you're not being pushy; you're just basically saying, "Hey, we're really here to help you. If you'd like to continue with your order, fine," and we don't follow up with more testing, following up with them multiple times, but we haven't implemented that yet. So, that's an idea on how you can save some of those abandoned carts and it's done 100% automatically.

Jim: And, let me just tell you one other thing I've done just to give you a tip, you may or may not be aware. I've done a lot of e-commerce type of steps on the Internet. Obviously, that's where my reputation is but I can tell on a higher ticket stuff, like you mentioned, the 800-dollar item, etc. where people can call in, if someone's willing to leave you their phone number for more information about an item, let's say it's \$1,000 or more, their phone needs to ring almost instantly because I've actually seen them and we've studied if someone leaves you a phone number and says they're interested in a product, if they don't get a call back within 10 minutes, that lead value gets cut in half. And then, you got about another hour and then it's chopped about 90% and the lead value is gone. And then after that, it's abysmal.

Basically, meaning if someone's willing to give you their phone number, their phone needs to ring. And, if it's a transaction worth your time to make a phone

call, you should have someone call them proactively. I'm not sure how many of your products fall into that category, that high-priced point but it's undeniable evidence that we've seen. Just imagine, they're sitting on a website and they say, "Hey, if you want more information on one of our 800-dollar widgets that you seem to be interested in, just fill this out and we'll send you some more information," they put in their email address, their phone number, their mailing address or whatever. And, while they're still sitting there, their phone rings because you've got someone monitoring and proactively being notified. And they say, "Hey, no pressure. It's a no pressure situation; just what questions do you have? How can I help you? If you needed any advice and then doing this a long time and here's my phone number. Call me on my cell phone personally if you ever need anything." That is a beautiful sales process we've just been describing. People are surprised and amazed when someone actually follows up that quickly, so I love what you're doing. I would even experiment. If I were you, I would experiment. You mentioned every hour, if there's any way to instantly know of an abandoned cart maybe even quicker than an hour. So, they're getting an email while they're still sitting in that same Internet section and they if they cannot order like if it's a 500-dollar cart or more that maybe you're asking for a phone number as part of your process, they get a phone call from someone proactively.

Mark: You know what?

Jim: Your closure can shoot up.

Mark: It's funny you say that because we've tried all different times and we've tried the instantaneous one and what we've found was it kind of freaks people out sometimes when they're on a website, they don't know. It feels like somebody's watching them. Some sites for the higher dollar volume transactions that are probably a good route to try. But, what we found on a lot of our sites is people call back and they kind of unnerved that someone's calling them when they didn't request a callback. To some people, it's totally fine but just on the few sites that we've tried and we found that 30 minutes to an hour was a good medium. You don't want to get too far past that. But absolutely, if you can have a person on the phone all the time all ready to make call, it's ideal and that's the way that you want to get to eventually because you're going to make the most money in having someone with a friendly voice that easy to deal with, it's not pushy that actually just help them process order, that's what you're trying to do.

Jim: Yeah, right. Perfect. And, there's all kinds of little ways you can tweak these sites and have fun with them and it's a whole another little world in and of

itself of growing this business but the great thing about having you available, Mark, is one, you've agreed to help us out if anyone has questions with e-commerce sites, and I'm sure you're going to get busier because this is your first real adventure off into the world of being an expert. Up until now, you've just kind of been running your own business. I teach people all the time once you've had some success, start teaching others how you did it. That's the next step of success, and there are so many healthy benefits to that. For one, it forces you to automate your original business and step away from it and outsource and have other people running the business, and you have to step away and you can start training others on how you did that and that's a great business model. People want that. And, the other benefit is, you can get paid pretty well for helping people as you succeed. And if there's someone listening to this call, it applies to you just as much as it applies to Mark. Have a little bit of success and then start teaching others how you did it. That's my two-step formula for massive success. I've seen it happen over and over and over again, and that's what you're doing. And, I know Mark, you've set up some sites in the same place where people went. If you're listening to this call, go back to the same site where you downloaded this call from. And just in case it got passed around and you didn't download it from anywhere, if you jump over to **mysilentteam.com/ecom.html**. That's ecom as in e-commerce, e-c-o-m dot html. So, I'll give you the full link again, mysilentteam.com/ecom.html and again, ecom is short for e-commerce. You'll see some more information about Mark, about what he's put together for us about his involvement with My Silent Team, and you can listen to this audio there live. I'm hoping to even put a transcript to there, Mark, so people can download and read through this and be able to take notes in some of the websites we mentioned and things much more easier that way. But also, how can people contact you if they're listening to this before we give them maybe your last final tip or two? If someone wants to contact you, you said you had an email address set up that we could use and let people know about.

Mark: Sure. People can contact me at ecommerceowners@gmail.com.

Jim: ecommerceowners@gmail.com and that will be it people who's listening to this call, maybe they have a question they want to bounce something off of Mark. But, I would say this too, if you are asking a question that you think others might benefit from the answer, jump over on to My Silent Team if you're a member. And if you're not a member, here's what we've got going on, we've got some great forums there where you can ask Mark question that others can benefit. But, if you're not a member, Mark is going to tell us in a minute about a site he set up that holds your hand and helps you set up e-commerce website, all the lessons you've learned today plus a ton more step-by-step fashion.

I've gone through this course, looked at it, it's tremendous and because it's step by step by step. It goes right through what you need to know and it's a new course. He's just finished it up. It looks beautiful. It's all taught by Mark himself. I want you to go over into the mysilentteam.com/ecom.html site and you'll see they offer it there. If you're a member of My Silent Team, we're giving you a huge discount; if you're not a member, you can still get this course at an incredibly low price. You can't lose either way. It's way underpriced, let me just put it to you that way. For courses I've seen similar to this, it could very easily be charging thousand dollars or more at least multiple hundreds and he's not. It's insanely underpriced course, plus you'll be working with the guy who put the course together if you have questions. And, even if you don't buy his course, if you get on the forums of My Silent Team and have a question about building e-commerce sites, Mark has generously agreed to give us his time and help you guys out with anything that comes up and I really appreciate that. And, you can take advantage of this because I think Mark is going to be an e-commerce guru before long based on his success and his willingness to help and share his system. But, jump on this and he's there to help us out.

But any other tips? You'd even mentioned, and I have a question for you and I didn't prep you for this question at all but how many of your sites fail and what do you do when site fails? And, what's your success ratio would be? Have you had to set up 500 sites to have a hundred that work or is the ratio better than that? How does that all look in reality as a business model and what do you do with those failed sites?

Mark: Well, it all depends on what you consider failed for a particular site. I have a site, for example, and it sells products that range from \$650 to \$1,500 to \$1,600 and I only make a few sales there per month and I really don't do anything to promote it up per year. I'll only make a few sales per year there. I really don't do very much at all to promote it other than some very simple link building. And so it cost me, for example, I pay, I think \$10 a month for our 1-800 number and then it also had a fax number typed to it and then my host team is about \$15 a month. And so, it's \$30 a month. If I had an opportunity to possibly make 600-dollar to 1,600-dollar sale, then it's worth about to keep it basically forever.

Now, there are some that will fail for lack of a better word because of variety of different things. Number one, you won't make any sales to continue with it. It doesn't make enough sense for you based on the amount of time that you have. In my approach, we try to weed those out 100% up at the front. You don't want

to just base your choice of a niche market based on something that you love. It's ideal that you can have a site that's based on a passion of yours but we show you step by step system to research online and find out exactly what's going to be a possible niche market for you, so you can get going from the very beginning knowing that you have an extremely good chance of succeeding and you basically look at those who are already doing well and model your site around it and just basically improve on that. So, there are many different reasons why you would want to keep sites running regardless of whether or not they are producing the amount of sales that you want for that particular time. One example that I have, if you would go back to the example, we're talking about these things as an investment and that's what they are, you're building an investment portfolio for your family and for your business that beats anything that you can get currently in the stock market have ever been able to get in the stock market. But honestly, the stock market, if you put a thousand dollars in today and it loses 40% of its value tomorrow, well, there's not much way to get that money back in the mere term. It's basically gone. So, you have to rely on time to be able to potentially get that back and you're relying on that particular company to do the right thing.

This is what I would need to do. I know a lot of people out there are worried about money right now and maybe they don't have a job or they're worried that they're going to lose their job, and this is by far the best investment that I've had. Now, if you look, when you see the FO yesterday, it was .5% interest year locally, 0.5% for the year. So, if you think about that per month, that's 0.045 interest per month. That doesn't even keep up with the inflation.

So, here's what you do; say you invest \$500 and built a really nice site, you found a dropship supplier to provide you a product so you have no inventory cost, and you do some very basic search engine optimization and basic traffic driving to the site. These are things that you after hours at night. It's not a difficult stuff. And then say, you only make three sales per month at an average profit of \$50 each which would be pretty low after you start building links and traffic and things like that, well, that's three sales per month times \$50 or \$150 in net profit each month, okay? Then let's say you're running the site yourself so you have zero labor cost and all other cost come up to \$50 per month, so that would be your webhosting, maybe your merchant account and just miscellaneous things, so your real net per month is \$100. So maybe, you're not making enough to leave them but if we're taking the step further, over about six-month period, you've made a total of \$600 or \$100 per month for six months. If you look at your initial investment of \$500, that's a 120% return only with 500-dollar investment and that's only over a six-month period. If we look over 12 months, your real rate of return is 240% on that initial \$500 plus the beauty of this is you recruit your entire initial investment of \$500 even the first five months and you

now built a system and you've built a template for your website that you can clone for other sites to save money there.

Now, let's say at the end of the 12 months, you decide, for whatever reason, you don't want it anymore. You're bored with it and you've had a lot of things that have happened where it just doesn't make sense for you anymore or whatever the reason, you can sell it. And there's a ready market out there just like Flippa.com, WebsiteBroker.com, iSellWebsite, there's a lot of them that want to buy sites just like yours. So, if you sell it for low price of \$1,200 which is 12 times monthly profit, let's think about this, you made \$1,200. Sorry about that. You made \$1,200 in cash from the profit while you were running the site, you've also made \$1,200 from the sale of your site, so that's \$24,000 you made and then you deduct your expenses of \$600 per year and you've made \$1,800. So that, in fact, is a 360% return on your initial 500-dollar investment in 12 months. And, the best thing is, you can do it over and over again. You've got your team of outsourcers, your template site that you can clone to new site, and it's just the best way that I can think off to invest your money right now with basically running down a site.

Jim: That's fantastic. Thanks for taking us through the math on that. And, I rarely think through the Internet from that perspective as an investment because it's just such a great investment. Every business model I introduced people to is just so much better than any kind of traditional, either things that just consistently fail. We all hear three out of five businesses fail in the first year and then half of them fail the next year and all of those are abysmal numbers like that and how hard it is to be an entrepreneur and all the big businesses like you want to go buy a franchise, your odds of success there. I don't teach that stuff; I teach very low basic, very low skill level needed, very low investment needed, high odds of success, high odds of long term stability type of things like this. So, I always just assume that those are the factors going in. But, I still want to play the devil's advocate for just a second specifically and find out how many sites you've set up that just really never panned out. And, I think once people are good at identifying markets that have potential, which is a skill that you teach people, their odds of success go way up. But, what did the reality look like for you as you were developing your portfolio of sites? How many of them in the beginning just never really turned into anything? How much money could you possibly lose if everything just goes horribly wrong which I know is a bad way to look at this but I want to help people be really careful with their consideration of this, what are they really getting into? And let's say, they make a series of really bad decisions and launched eight sites and they all fail, I mean, is that going to happen? Did it happen to you? What was your experience like?

Mark: Well, I closed several sites. Well, I've sold most of the ones that I've closed and they were for varying reasons. Number one, probably 1 and 20, I would say, would never get to the point where it was time-wise valuable for me to continue, so what I would do is sell it. This is what happens more frequently than not. For example, when I was first starting out, I decided to sell ghillie and these are things like snipers wear and they're basically outfits that hunters and paintball people wear and they basically look like you're covered in leaves.

Jim: Wow.

Mark: So anyway, I was selling those and I set up a site. There were few different problems. Number one, the software that I was using was very difficult to manage. It took a long time for me to customize it. The people can click customize but very costly, so I couldn't get the backend set up for where it would be manageable for me. Number two, the suppliers that I was using were unreliable. They were constantly out of stock of the products. I still get orders but what happen was I would have to basically refund the people typically and there weren't any other dropshipper that were supplying this particular product at the time. And so, basically, with all of those different factors together, I ended up selling that site to another person that's also in that market that already supplying that type of product. So, that was one example.

Another example, I sold stun guns and pepper spray and things like that and this is the site that I actually bought for an investment. So, I bought it and then ran it for about a year and made sales the entire time. What got me out of that particular business is there's a tremendous number of state regulations on what you can and cannot ship into those phase and they'd even get found to a city level. So, if someone works and order a stun gun through city, for example, Washington, D.C. that didn't allow any sort of stun gun or tasers or anything like that, it was a big deal and there were legal ramifications to that. So, I became uncomfortable with having to be so detail-oriented and keep up with those laws as they change so often. So, what I ended up doing again, I looked around at some of my competitors and I contacted them directly, they had set up to this very specialized kind of shipping and they know these products in and out, so they're going to be the best ones to be able to take this site, capitalize on the traffic it was generating and it was a really win-win for all of those because I was able to get all of my investment back. I made all the money in profit, so I've had over a year return. And, that was just basically a headache that I wanted to get rid off so that's why I closed that. In almost every single site that I've ever launched, I had made sales and some to the point where I was surprised that I had made sales. For example, I was selling shooting net guns which are these little guns. You've seen it on our MTV, they're still on the floor but it's made for

law enforcement officers and animal control specialists and put a button on the net itself to capture something. And, I just have decided probably about a week, and I applied a bit of link building and content generation on different article sites and there were 900-dollar units and I sold two or three. Well, it turned out, again, my dropship supplier was not reliable. They had to purchase it from China to bring them over, so there was like about a month lag. Anyway, I've sold that and got back all my money and I just think it like that. The biggest thing is to give it a try, commit to it, and then if things don't turn out, there is an option so you don't lose a little bit of money that you put into those. All those sites combined, I probably invested under \$500 to get them started and into the point that they were and I made probably \$6,000 to \$12,000 over that period. So, there's not really a downside to it.

Jim: So even they're failed sites because you applied some basic traffic generation techniques to them and you are rewarded fairly quickly for those basic efforts, you're able to sell them to someone who knew what to do with them, so even your bad ideas can become profitable. It's like your worst case scenario is breaking even on these once you've got some. And, the people listening to this right now have the benefit of having a guy who has done this dozens and dozens of times as their handholding trainer talking you through this stuff, which is what your course is. It talks you right through making these positions. And there are literally millions of opportunities out there, things that just haven't been set up and done yet. It's so far. It's not a matter of saturation; this is an up and coming trending opportunity with all kinds of opportunity here which is the reason I brought you in today.

I personally think, and I've gotten pretty good at picking the winners. I kind of make a habit out of forecasting what things are heading and seeing what really work and then teaching my people what to pay attention, the people will listen to me. I've gotten pretty good at it and I think this is huge. It is a great opportunity given to you right now and for the long term as well. So, jump over as we wrap this up. Jump over to mysilentteam.com/ecom.html and again, ecom is e-c-o-m short for e-commerce. And, you'll see all about Mark Mathis and his offer for you and what we've pulled together and you can download this interview and maybe even get the transcript of it, like I said, so you can read through. If you didn't take good notes, you can scroll back and see different websites that were mentioned and things.

Hey, Mark, I just want to thank you, man. This has been a long call. I know you're a busy dude. I really appreciate the great training. There's going to be some good follow-up questions, I'm sure, that'll come our way and people going to email you, and we'll give that address. I'll have you give it here again in just a

second, or they can jump over to mysilentteam.com. It's the best few bucks you can spend if you're serious about your internet business future, and jump in with literally thousands of people who are making money on the internet and helping each other out with great discussion forums, great business plans, and great ideas. And, we mentioned OfflineBiz earlier as well. Well, basically, that is a site where you take all those skills that you're learning, and we teach you how to help other businesses in the real world, the brick and mortar guys that have real businesses with stuff on the shelves or maybe it's a dentist or maybe any other business that relies on leads and the Internet to generate leads. You can start helping them in that with all these skills and that's very lucrative as well. So, little commercial there but people want to touch basically, Mark, one more time, what was that email address?

Mark: Sure. It's ecommerceowners@gmail.com.

Jim: All right, or jump over to mysilentteam.com/ecom.html. And, I'm going to wrap this one up, man. Stay on the line, Mark, I'm going to end the recording and then, for those of you who had listened to this, let us know what your thoughts and your feedback. Give me your review of this. Other questions you want to ask Mark, you can ask me and I'll make sure he gets it. But, I really appreciate your time as always, everyone listening to this and Mark as well. I'm here to serve you guys and do my best at it that I possibly can, so I want your feedback. Let me know how I'm doing.

All right. I'm signing off. Thanks again, Mark.

Mark: Thanks everybody.