



Episode 7: Spreadshirt: My Newest Passive Income Stream and How You Can Earn Too

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Hey what's up everybody! Welcome to numero siete of my podcast, number 7. I'm kind of pumped about this podcast because I hope it's going to give some of you another way or possible way to monetize your website.

I just got my first check from SpreadShirt and it was 530 bucks and 20 cents, to be exact. And you can go to 2createawebsite.com/podcast7 to see a screenshot of the earnings. I do that to show proof. I don't do that to brag. I know there's a lot of sites out here that talk about making money and they never show that they are. So I do that from time to time for that very reason but not to show off. Oh and while you're there, you gotta check out my new site design. Yaaaay! My site got a little facelift about a week ago so you gotta check it out.

SpreadShirt is a print on demand affiliate program where you simply upload an image, and then you can put that image on a shirt, a button, a hat or whatever. Then you mark up the price to whatever you want to sell it for, and your markup is your commission. So if

the base price of the shirt is \$10 and you sell it for \$20, then you get \$10 for every shirt sold. It's completely free.

Now there are premium options and I'm going to talk about this later in the podcast, but it doesn't cost you anything. The only thing you need are images, and the really great thing is SpreadShirt does all the shipping and customer service. Don't fret, you don't have to be a designer or own Photoshop to make money with SpreadShirt. There are options and I'm going to be talking about those options in this podcast.

SpreadShirt is not the only P.O.D. store, there are tons of them. There's Zazzle, there's CafePress, there's Teespring, but they all tend to work on a similar principle. You upload an image, set the price and whatever price you set, you subtract that from the base price and that's your commission.

Some of you may remember me using Zazzle. I used Zazzle between 2011 and 2014, but Zazzle in my opinion is very difficult to make much money with because of the cost of their shirts. The minimum you can charge for a Zazzle shirt, the basic shirt is like \$20-\$21. So if you want to make a decent commission, you almost have to charge 30 bucks for a T-shirt and I'm sorry, most people aren't going to pay \$30 for a T-shirt. I was getting sales on Zazzle but the commission was horrible, so this is what made me switch to SpreadShirt.

My little cousin, shout out to MyNaturalReality.com, she has her own SpreadShirt store for both her hair site, and she had mentioned she was getting like a \$9 commission on some of her shirts. I was like \$9! I'm getting like a dollar, if that on a lot of my Zazzle shirts. So I researched SpreadShirt and I put up a store and I saw that I could charge like \$19, and get like a \$9 commission. So I was like okay, there has to be a catch. Maybe the shirts are poor quality or whatever, but no. I ordered some of them myself because you can order your own shirts at the base price, and the quality is surprisingly good. So I no longer promote my Zazzle store, I use SpreadShirt now.

What's cool about SpreadShirt and any of these stores, you don't have to deal with shipping, you don't have to physically create the shirts. All you have to do is upload an image and when a sale is made, the company ships the shirt for you. Gotta love it.

Here's the other thing I hated about Zazzle. You know how when you're shopping and you see a dress or shirt or something that you like, and usually they have other color options. So you click the little swatch to see the other options and the picture changes, and usually the price is the same. Well, with Zazzle if you want to sell that same design on a red shirt, it's going to cost like \$5 more than the white shirt, so it's just not an intuitive shopping experience as far as I was concerned. That was another reason I just wasn't happy with Zazzle and moved to SpreadShirt.

Now let's talk about creating images for your shirts, because I'm sure that's what a lot of you are wondering. As I already said, you don't have to know Photoshop, you don't have to be a designer to make money with SpreadShirt, and here's why.

First of all, they have a marketplace, and the marketplace consists of all the designs that other people have allowed you to use on your store. The catch is, you have to pay them their commission.

Here's an example. Let's say you have a website on golf and you want to sell some golf the-shirts. You go to SpreadShirt, you open up your little free store, you do a search in their marketplace for different golf-related keywords and you find some images. So let's say the base price of the shirt that you want to sell is \$11. You add the commission for the image, whatever that is. It's going to be different depending on what the owner of the image assigned, so it might be \$4 for example. Let's say the base price of the shirt is 11, the commission the designer set for their image is \$4, that's 15 bucks. If you want to sell the shirt for \$25, then your commission would be \$10.

So you can use other people's images that they've allowed you to use that are in the marketplace. That's why they submit them to the marketplace. The downside to that obviously is that your shirts

are going to have to be a higher price, because you've got that middleman commission in there. And if you own rights to the image yourself like I do, you can choose not to have those images in the marketplace if you want. You don't have to put your images out in the marketplace because you might not want anybody to be able to sell shirts with your images. You may want them exclusive to your store, and that's certainly an option. I do have a couple of my shirts that I don't submit to the marketplace.

I should also point out you guys that about 30-35% of my commissions come from the marketplace. So people using images that I allow them to on their stores or sell shirts with my images on them, and then I get that design commission that I set, or people going to SpreadShirt.com, doing a search, finding my image, making a product and then getting the commission that way as well. You can make money a couple of ways with SpreadShirt, it's not just from your store. You can also make money from the marketplace, but the majority of my income comes from my store directly.

The other option is SpreadShirt has a text editor. This is my least favorite option honestly. The text editor is very basic and I think I've used this on one of my shirts, and not surprisingly, the shirt hasn't sold. It's a very, very basic like block text editor and it's an option if you don't have access to an image editor, and you don't want to use any of the options that I'm going to be talking about in a few minutes.

The next option is obviously, make the images yourself, which is what I do for probably 50-60% of my images. I use Photoshop and I'm not a designer. I always say that but I am fairly savvy with Photoshop, and I'm getting better and better. So the t-shirts you see with text and shapes, those are ones that I create myself. The ones with the drawings of the women with the Afros, I outsource those or I buy rights to those. But the simple images with the text (and a lot of them do sell, just the plain old text), I create those myself. The cool thing about that is, even if you don't know a lot about Photoshop, using the text tool is very easy so you can do a lot just with the text tool alone. You can stretch the text, you can warp the text and you can make some fun-looking designs just with text.

Speaking of Photoshop, some of you may already know this. I launched a course on Photoshop not too long ago. I have to say you guys, I was pleasantly surprised at how many people from my list bought the course, because I'm not really known for my design skills. But I do know enough about Photoshop to be dangerous as I like to say, so if you like the lead images that you see on my blog posts that come out on Mondays or my podcast, that's what this course focuses on.

It's really about how to use Photoshop to create web images, so you'll be able to apply the lessons to create banners, headers and social media images, those kinds of things. It's not a course if you want to learn how to take wrinkles out of people's skin or make somebody who's 180 pounds look 120 pounds; it's not that kind of course. It's really a web images course, so I want to make that clear if you're interested in getting it.

But I should point out, there is one video in the course that does show you how to set up a basic image with text in shapes, if you want to make money the way I'm making money with SpreadShirt, Zazzle, CafePress or whatever. But the majority of the course is just Photoshop basics, so you can learn to create web images. I wanted to definitely mention that in case you want to get it.

Speaking of getting it, if you want to buy the course, I've set up a coupon for my podcast listeners so you can go to 2createawebsite.com/psdiscount as in PhotoShop, and that will be a long standing discount that I have out there.

Now I know some of you guys are thinking, why in the world would I buy or use Photoshop when there are tons of free image editors out here? Here's why, and let me just say this. I'm not going to knock these services just because I have a Photoshop course, because I think some of them are great. I really, really do. But you can't just take a template from Canva and upload it to Zazzle or CafePress or SpreadShirt and make a profit from it. You can't resell their templates. I guarantee if you look at their terms, that would be illegal, plus I don't even know if those images would be in the right

format.

So as great as all these free services are out here, you're always going to be limited to fonts. You can't install fonts on Canva like you can on Photoshop, which I do show you how in the course, so there's limitations that you're always going to have with those free tools. It's why even though they're out there, I always go back to Photoshop.

Getting back to your image creation options, you can outsource. You can use services like Elance or oDesk, 99designs, but I do have a warning because I had a very unfortunate experience. It was like a Monday night, I was chilling on my couch watching some Jimmy Fallon; I love Jimmy Fallon by the way. I picked up my phone to check my mail and I noticed I had an email, and the subject was 'My design on your shirts.' I thought "uh-oh," so I started going through my head. Okay, I bought that image from this site, I had somebody design that image. What image could he be talking about, because he didn't tell me.

I replied and I said, "I honestly have no idea what you're talking about." He replies and he tells me which image it is. It happened to be one of the images that I bought or that I had someone supposedly design for me on 99designs. So for those of you guys that don't know what 99designs is, it's a crowdsourcing design site.

Let's say you're looking for a particular design but you don't have any specifics, you just have a rough idea. So you might say, hey I'm looking for a drawing of a woman with an Afro and big earrings. Designers from all over the world will submit their ideas and then you can narrow them down, and you can tell them hey, I like this but can you make the earrings bigger? Can you make her dress red and all that? Then you take the designers or the designs you like best to the final round, and then ultimately you decide which one you like and then you pay the designer. That's exactly what I did.

It turned out, this guy had stolen the image from somebody's site. Now he ought to be teaching a Photoshop course, because he took the guy's watermark off the image, he made it the color I needed it

to be (which isn't a big deal in Photoshop.) But when I saw the original image, I was really taken aback by how he just took off the watermark and really made that image his own. Even when I asked him to change the shape of the earrings, he made the changes that I needed him to make really easily, as if it was his own image. When you know Photoshop, you can do that.

But it was really unfortunate, so I called 99designs and they immediately refunded my money. They apologized, not that they needed to because it wasn't their fault. I mean they had no way of knowing that this guy was a thief, and the owner of the design was very understanding. He was just like, "Lisa be careful with outsourcing designs from these sites because that happens a lot." A lot of times, these people steal images because it's so easy for them to do, and if you know Photoshop, you can doctor up any image.

But there's something good that came out of all this. I was just having a conversation on Twitter not too long ago with one of my followers. His name is Daniel of WebsiteCandi, that's Candy with an i. What's up Daniel? One thing about social media when you start to develop any kind of a following, a lot of people will contact or tweet you or whatever, really because they're looking for you to do something for them. Like I've had people tweet me and act as if they want to be friendly, and then after 3 or 4 exchanges, it's like "Oh by the way Lisa, will you tweet my link out to your followers?" and it's like, really?

But what I loved about Daniel is that we just started chatting it up about football on Twitter. If you follow me on Twitter especially on Sunday, you know I'm tweeting about football usually. I love, love, love, football you guys. I even play fantasy football, have a fantasy football team and for those of you guys that don't know what fantasy football is, no, I'm not out there on somebody's field getting tackled. I said that to a lady once and I kid you not, she thought I was playing football. I was like lady, I'm 5'4", a buck 20. I am not out on anybody's field.

Anyway, we just talked football back and forth on Twitter and because he was genuine and didn't seem to be out for anything, I

got curious. I went to his profile and I looked to see what he did, and I found out he was a designer. I just tweeted him and I said, hey by the way do you do designs or drawings, because I need some designs for my t-shirt store, because even though I can use Photoshop to do the text, the shapes and those kinds of things, I don't draw at all.

If you follow me on YouTube, you probably remember that SEO video I did last year with the penguin. Yeah, that's the extent of my drawing skills right there, pretty scary. I don't draw, so I was looking for somebody to do some designs for me, and he goes "Yeah." So we got on the phone and I told him what I was looking for. About 3 days later, he had finished the design and what's even cooler is I put the shirt up because it doesn't take any time to get a shirt up. All you do is upload the image, that's what I love about these stores. And literally within 24 hours, that shirt sold.

The only promotion I did was, I posted the image to Pinterest. I have a Pinterest board for my Natural Hair T-shirts, so that's the only promotion I did. I have no idea if that was the reason it sold, but my point is that had to be one of my fastest selling shirts. I'm really excited now to have a designer that I can work along with, so I'll probably be sending you some more work, so shout out to WebsiteCandi.

If you're curious, I don't even think I mentioned what my store is. It's NapturallyCurly.com/shirts and that'll redirect you to my store. It's Napturally, N-A-P-T-U-R-A-L-L-Y. Let me tell you guys, if I had known I was going to start a podcast, I probably would have chosen a different name for that site because every time I mention that site, I have to spell it because it sounds like naturally but it's not, that's somebody else's site. The shirt that WebsiteCandi or Daniel designed, is the one that says Afro-text 2. At the time I'm recording this, it's the very first shirt, so you can check it out if you're interested.

Ok moving on, the other way you can get images for your store is you can buy rights from other stock photo websites. I don't know how many of you know this but if you go to ThinkStock photos or

iStock photos, you can actually buy an extended license to resell those images on shirts. That's what I did on some of the images that you see on my store.

The downside to this though is that you may see these images all over the web if other people do the same thing, so you're not going to have as much originality if you do this. But the one advantage I have is because I have some Photoshop skills, I'm able to take the images and color the Afros or color the lips, change the lipstick color and all that kind of stuff. That makes it a little more unique, but that is a definite downside because the images are not going to be original. Buying rights is not exactly cheap. It's going to cost you between \$100 to \$200, but the idea is you're going to make that money back if your shirt sells, hopefully.

The final way to get images for your site is you can use SpreadShirt's graphic service. For \$19.99, they will take any image, it could be an image from your phone, an image from your digital camera or whatever, and they will turn it into a vector image so you can sell it on your store.

What the heck is a vector image? In simple terms, it's simply an image that can be resized and it doesn't lose any quality, it doesn't get grainy, it doesn't get pixilated. That's the format that images need to be in, when you make money or when you sell products on these types of sites. So you can't just take a picture from your phone, upload it and put it on a shirt. It has to be in a certain format. When you work with text and shapes in Photoshop, you don't really have to do anything to them but pictures, they need to be in a vector format. Otherwise it's not going to work and SpreadShirt and these other stores aren't going to accept the image.

Let's say you have a dog website and you want to create these dog-related t-shirts. You can send SpreadShirt a picture of your dog Max and SpreadShirt will turn Max into a vector image. Then you can open up Max in Photoshop or whatever and put some text on top of him, do all kinds of things and then you can sell shirts with Max on them. Pretty cool.

So I've just given you 6 different ways to get shirts for your store, so there's absolutely no excuse for you not to at least try this if you've got some ideas, or you think this will work with your niche. Speaking of working with your niche, a lot of you may be wondering, is this going to really work for my site? Here's the deal you guys. We live in this me, me, me take a selfie every 5 seconds society, where people love showing off what they're wearing, they love wearing shirts with different sayings on them. So I think this is why this can work with so many different topics.

The key is really the design and the sayings. Maybe if you can come up with some creative sayings that will apply to the topic of your site, something funny, something inspirational, something witty, I think this can work for a number of different sites. I know a lot people who have websites on entertainment struggle with ways to monetize their websites, so I think this is a great way to monetize those kinds of sites as well.

Let's talk about promoting your store. You're probably wondering what have I done to earn that money. The great thing about having a website that has some traffic, is that once you put your store up, a lot of your sales will be passive. That's really what's happened with me, but I'm going to go through the various ways that I have promoted the store, just to give you some ideas.

The first way is my email list. After people subscribe to my list, there's a follow-up email that goes out that thanks them for subscribing. On that email, I have links to various pages, some of my more important pages or pages that convert really with different products or whatnot. I also link to my store, that's one way.

The other way is through my forum. I created a banner in Photoshop with some of the shirts on the banner, and a call to action to go shop. That's another. I also have banners throughout the site. I've got one on my sidebar and I also have images in various places throughout the site that point people over to the store.

The other thing I do is I actually take pictures of myself, wearing the shirts. I think this is very important because a lot of times with these POD stores, people wonder about the quality of the shirt. How's the printing? How is the fit? So when they can see you wearing the shirt, it sort of helps them envision how it's going to look on them, and I think it helps sell.

If you go to the landing page that's tied to this podcast at 2createawebsite.com/podcast7, you'll see me wearing one of the shirts I created. I have that same image on my hair site and then I put a caption below it in Photoshop that says, "To get this shirt, go here" and then when you click it, it takes them right over to the order page for that shirt. As soon as I put that shirt on my site, it started selling and it actually ended up being one of my top sellers of the summer. So yeah, letting people see how the shirt looks on a human and not just floating in the air like it is on the SpreadShirt store, it does make a difference I think.

The other thing I do which I already talked about is I have a Pinterest board just for Natural Hair T-shirts. I post pictures of my shirts and I also post pictures of other people's shirts as well. The unfortunate thing about having an affiliate store like this is, you don't really know what sites are bringing you the sales. Is it my forum, is it the link that I have at the top of my site, is it the banner on the side of my site? I don't really know, and that is the unfortunate thing when you don't own the store that you're selling on, so I can only guess. That is kind of a bummer but hey, you do what you can do.

Here's another idea. I haven't used this, but there are some YouTubers out there named Kevin and Mikael, they have a channel called the Scorpion Show. They basically focus on black pop culture, and they're hilarious. One thing they do with their SpreadShirt store that I really admire, is they use social media really well. They tell people to tweet them or Instagram them pictures of themselves wearing the shirts. They show those pictures in the intros of their videos on their YouTube channel, so it's a win-win. They get promotion for their shirts and the people, their followers, get to see themselves in their videos. I think that's a genius way of promoting

your shirts.

If you have a very strong social media base or YouTube base, you can really, really use that to promote your stores. Think about it. You can post pictures on your timeline of your shirts, so if you've got a great design, you can put a picture of the shirt up there and then tell people how to get it. If you have a very engaged following, particularly if they're targeted, meaning they like the same things, then I think this is a great, great way to make some extra money because people do love t-shirts. They love buying shirts with sayings and they like shirts with great designs. That's something that's never going to go out of style. Let me tell you, we are in the self expression, look at me all the time era. So hey, why not take advantage of it, right?

Now I want to talk about earnings and maximizing your earnings with these kinds of stores. I can't speak for CafePress or some of the others because I haven't used them. The only ones I've really used are Zazzle and SpreadShirt. I already told you that I didn't like Zazzle's pricing, it's just too high as far as I'm concerned. But what I love about SpreadShirt is that you can charge \$19 for a shirt, especially if you upload your own designs and you don't have to pay a third party commission on the design, you can make a \$9 commission on a \$19 shirt. My commission per shirt is usually between \$7 and \$9 per shirt.

Over the summer when the sales were really good, there would be plenty of times where somebody would order 4 or 5 shirts with one order, so that's like a \$45 commission. That's how I'm able to rack in that income because people are buying multiple shirts, because they're reasonably priced. With Zazzle, you can't sell your shirts for \$15. It's impossible because their prices are too expensive. The minimum you can sell it for is like \$21 now, it's ridiculous. Their prices have actually gone up. I never got multiple shirt orders in one order, it was usually just one shirt if anybody bought anything. Now I'm getting 3, 4, 5 shirts per order.

When you're trying to decide which shirt to put your design on, you're going to have different options. There's a basic shirt, all the

way up to the premium shirts. I never use the premium shirts because if you're going to make money, you almost have to charge like \$35 or \$40 for the shirt, and I'm sorry, nobody's going to pay that for a t-shirt. So my tip is to always choose, and I hate to use the word cheapest, because it's not really a cheap shirt. Like I said, I've purchased my own shirts and it's a good quality shirt, but it's the lowest priced shirt because you can markup the price and get the best commission, and still not have your shirt be too expensive.

When you see a shirt on my site for \$19, I'm getting a \$9 commission for that shirt, and that's pretty good for a retail affiliate program. If any of you guys have ever checked into apparel or retail affiliate programs, the commissions are usually really, really low. I'm talking like 5%, 7%, it's ridiculous. So the fact that I can get that kind of commission and I don't have to deal with creating the shirt or shipping the shirt or anything like that, to me that's totally worth it because it's just passive income. So that's my tip: always choose the lowest priced shirt to put your image on, because you can maximize your commissions.

Speaking of maximizing your commissions, you might be wondering, Lisa, why don't you just sell them directly and cut out the middleman? You would make so much more money. Of course I would, but there's also a disadvantage to that as well. There's the shipping, there's getting somebody to create the shirts for you, there's a lot of legwork involved in that. Because I'm not trying to create a t-shirt brand and this is just some passive income that I earn every now and then, I'm not really interested in it at that level.

If I was trying to make a full-time living selling t-shirts, then yeah, maybe I would think about that. But for me, I love the fact that I can fire up Photoshop really quickly, I can come up with an idea, grab the text tool create the shirt in 2 seconds ... not 2 seconds but 5 minutes or whatever, upload it and the shirt's for sale. I will never forget over the summer, it was the shirt in my store that says 'My man loves my natural hair,' that shirt just like the one Daniel created for me, as soon as I put it up, it sold within that first 24 hours. I love that, that's that instant gratification that you get when

you have this kind of a store. I think it's really cool.

I love how quick all of it can happen. You can just open up your graphics program, create a shirt design, upload it and it's ready for sale. I love that. So yes, I would definitely acknowledge that you can make more selling shirts in other ways, but for me the convenience is way more important than anything at this point.

I always wanted to mention that SpreadShirt has a premium store option, and I did sign up for that. The premium store option is \$100 a year and this is what you get. You get to email your customers, I believe you can email them up to 4 times a month and it will also send out an automated newsletter every month with your new designs, so that's a nice feature. You also have the option of showing your sale prices, so if you have shirt that was \$25 and then you mark it down to 19, the site will show the old price, so it shows people that they're getting a deal. There's also some other features as well but those in my opinion, are the biggest perks of having a premium store.

That's been my experience with SpreadShirt in a nutshell. I love it, it's really been my favorite affiliate program for 2014, simply because I've first of all made more money than I ever thought that I would make doing this. Second of all, I'm learning more and more about Photoshop and it allows me to practice and get creative, and it's just fun. Like I'm always saying, you've got to have fun out here, you've got to have fun. This is just another way that I've found to diversify my income, and as you guys know I am all about income diversification. That's for sure.

I wanted to mention Teespring briefly. I haven't tried T-Spring but it's something a lot of people are using and I think this is a good option if you have a really engaged social media following, or a really engaged email list or site that gets a lot of traffic. But how T-Spring works is, you create a design just like I've been talking about in this podcast and you upload it to Teespring. You set a price for the shirt and then you tell Teespring how many shirts you believe you can sell. Let's say the shirt's \$10 and you tell them you can sell 100, so your commission would be \$1000. The catch is, you have to

make those sales within a certain timeframe.

What people do is they upload their image and their shirt is created, and then they promote it to their following usually on their social media or their email list or whatever. Anybody that wants to order, will pre-order. So if the person meets their pre-order goal, then Teespring will make the shirts, ship them to everybody and then you collect your money. But the key is you have to meet that minimum, whatever you said that you could reach; 100 shirts, 50 shirts or whatever your pre-order goal is.

What some people are doing is they're using Facebook ads to make money with Teespring. Here's an example of how that would work. You probably remember the Boston bombings from last April, April 2013. A lot of people created Boston strong, Boston love type t-shirts or anything positive surrounding Boston. Let's say you create a t-shirt with a Boston design on it and you upload it to Teespring. What you would do is you would go on Facebook and you would buy ads targeted to people who live in Boston, and you would set your budget. Let's say you were going to make \$1000 if you meet your goal orders, so you might spend \$200 on your Facebook ad campaign.

Let's pretend you meet that goal and your ad campaign does sell 100 shirts, then you make \$800. That's a \$1000 for the shirts that you said you would sell, minus the \$200 that you spent on ads. Now I'm making this sound very simple, but it's not really that simple. In fact there's an article out there from a woman who did find a way to make money with Teespring, but she admitted it was work. I'll link to that article in the show notes if you want to read it. It's 2createawebsite.com/podcast7 and you can see the link there.

Let me just say, I don't know how I feel about profiting off of a tragic event like that. I know people do it, but that was just an example that popped into my head because I know I've seen people do that.

Let's just wrap this up. Let me talk about my MOP of the podcast, which is my moral of the podcast. If you want to be successful with

a POD store, there are 3 things you've got to have: good designs, good price and targeted traffic. This is not some get rich quick scheme. If you don't have any traffic or if you don't have enough targeted traffic, then yes, it's going to be harder to make money with this.

But I have to say, I'm not usually one who advocates that you try to make money without a website, but this is one of those examples, thanks to social media, where I think you actually can do well if you have an engaged social media following, because you can post pictures of the shirts in your feed. If you've got an engaged following, a good design for the shirt and the price is right, yeah, I believe you can do well without a website in this case. I wouldn't recommend it for everybody, but I think it's doable, definitely.

That's it for this podcast, you guys. Don't forget, if you want to get my Photoshop course, you can get your discount at 2createawebsite.com/psdiscount. I promise you if you're intimidated by Photoshop, you are going to be blown away by how easy I'll make it for you. I promise. I teach it in such a way that's really going to help you learn the basics, so I hope you check it out. Thanks so much for listening everybody and I'll talk to you on the 15th of next month. Peace.