

Interview with Patrick Ruddell, Founder & CEO of ScienceFiction.com

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Before we get started, you know DomainTools.com, right? I can type whois.sc/domainname really fast and I do it daily, but until recently I didn't know how powerful their other tools were. If I want a domain name, I can set a free alert to notify me when it changes status. If it goes to auction, I can use their sales history tool to find comps and determine my Maximum bid price. After I buy it and develop the domain into a business, I can set up alerts for any domains registered that contain my trademark, and I can set up registrant alerts of all my competitors so I can keep an eye on what domains they're buying and know what they're up to before they make any announcements. DomainTools.com needs to be in your toolbox, like it is in mine. Go sign up for an account on DomainTools.com today.

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Here's your program.

Michael: Hey everyone, my name is Michael Cyger. I'm the publisher of DomainSherpa.com, the Domain Name Authority and the place where you can learn about the domain name industry directly from the experts themselves.

Science fiction is the genre of literature, television and movies that encompasses futuristic science and technology, space travel and of course aliens. I think my favorite science fiction series was Star Trek, the original series. And my favorite episode must be The Triples, those small fuzzy little balls of purring sound that reproduced at an amazing rate.

If you search for science fiction on Google you will find about 186,000,000 results and using the Google Ad Words keyword tool you will find 60,000 global monthly and 12,000 US based monthly exact match search queries and average cpc of about .90. It is an enormous industry. The website currently in position number three of those 186,000,000 organic results on Google for science fiction is ScienceFiction.com.

And today we are joined by the founder and CEO of ScienceFiction.com Patrick Ruddell. He is also the head cook at ChefPatrick.com a leading domain name industry blog. Patrick welcome to the show.

Patrick: Howdy, how are you doing? Thanks for having me.

Michael: Great.

Patrick: You ticked off those science fiction stats and it just blew my mind. I didn't even realize that there was that many search results.

Michael: It is enormous and to be at number three of such an enormous pool of information around the world is quite an accomplishment for such a short period of time and we will get into that a little bit. So Patrick I like to start the show with a little background on the guest. So I want to ask you to start with what is your favorite science fiction series and why?

Patrick: This is going to create controversy right here for you. I am not a huge Sci-Fi nut. I actually bought ScienceFiction.com purely as a business decision knowing that it was a huge niche and that it had this cult like following of an audience. Something that I don't think many domain names or many websites can really bring like this can. But new series (I do like science fiction don't get me wrong), but I would say as far as a new series I had been watching Falling Skies on TNT. That is an awesome, awesome, awesome show. Star Trek, Star Wars all the old stuff I definitely like but...I don't know if this is good to admit but I love Smallville. Me and my wife we watched every season of it until it ended just recently. So that is a good show.

Michael: It is a good series and I actually just started watching Falling Skies also. A fantastic series if you have Comcast you can actually go back and get the pilot and the first few episodes on demand, which caught me up after I found out about it. Let's find out a little bit about your domain name background. Can you tell us how many domain names you currently own and generally what TLDS, how they shake out?

Patrick: Sure I have I think like most domainers we've had to reduce our portfolio. Get rid of the garbage. When I started in the industry about three years ago my philosophy was just buy everything and I'm going to make a million bucks. And it didn't work that way. I don't know what happened. So I trimmed the fat, I am down to about 300 domain names which I can either sell or develop. I have a development plan for everything I own at this point and that is how I tailored it down to what I have so I can say "If it doesn't sell I'll do this". And my philosophy when I first started this is: Have these three or four or five thousand domain names and flip them. Just quick flips. And that is how I started. I was a quick flipper. If I got \$25 for a domain I paid \$8 for it I was happy. You do that a couple hundred times a month you can earn a living. It is a lot of work, a lot of tedious work and something that I am not interested in doing anymore. I'm on to bigger and better things so. I probably wouldn't look at offers under \$1,000 for a domain name I own. It is just not even worth responding to at certain points. So short answer is 300.

Michael: And how did you first get into domain investing?

Patrick: I was a real estate investor. Six, five, four years ago. Very successful in that. We bought and sold roughly 300 investment properties in the Tampa Bay area. Did a very well living! Market took a down in 2008. I actually sold my company because I am a very brandable guy as you can see with Chef Patrick. The company name was Mr. Three Days. I had an awesome little cartoon character. We spent tens of thousands on marketing benches and billboards and newspaper advertising. So it was a real brand. And when the market took a down turn I realized I didn't want to work that hard any more to make the money. It was a great living. I'm actually very spoiled in my wife and I talk about this to this day, real estate a quick flip I made \$20,000. A quick flip in a domain is a little bit different. It's a \$1,000. It is a little bit different.

So I sold the company. I made a significant amount of money off that and in 2008 I actually took those profits and that is when I bought those thousands of domain names thinking hey I'm going to buy online real estate. I say I'm a real estate expert because I really am. That is what I know. I know physical real estate and I know single family residents. So I was going to take that knowledge and transfer it over to the online world. And there are so many similarities that for me it has made my domain career a million times easier than I would say somebody coming off the street that doesn't know real estate.

Michael: That makes sense and there are a lot of similarities. How did you first decide I'm going to go online real estate? Did you have a few domain names that you got an offer on and that led you to think about transferring your knowledge offline to online? What was the impetus that caused you to think about online?

Patrick: I hate to say it again but real estate my biggest thing in real estate was online marketing and buying and selling houses online. In Tampa Bay I was one of the first investors to bring these crappy houses online so investors can look at pictures or a video and see if they want to buy a house compared to us going out, driving thirty minutes to look at the house, drive back and decide it is a waste of time. So building the online brand, something I even did back as early as '97 - I was 19 years old. We had a website. So I always knew it was something about online branding. Although I had never had an

offer for a domain name that I owned I knew there was the potential for it. And it wasn't until I actually bought a couple thousand domain names that I found NamePros.com. And then that is really where I started shifting from a novice collector as Morgan Lynn would say stop collecting and start investing. I stopped just collecting domains and really figured it could be a business.

And that is when it just shifted for me. NamePros was a great head start for me. I learned a lot of information on there. People will tell you forms are good and bad. And you know what figure out for your own what information is good for you. But it really helped me a lot. And then of course reading blogs like DNJournal.com Journal and Park.com. Actually I was in Tampa Bay so Park.com and Ron Jackson were both local and I had an opportunity to meet them first in the industry. And once you meet those guys you want to be in the business. You want to be Ron Jackson right? Next comes ChefPatrick.com.

Michael: So you started ChefPatrick.com, you started buying domain names and flipping them, eventually you accepted a job with Oversee.net, the brokerage arm moniker.com. I feel like I have to bring up an issue in your background in order for the interview to be complete and we can just get it out of the way. I'm not one to harp on mistakes Patrick. I've made plenty in my life and I hate it when my wife brings them up myself, but I think our readers and watchers expect a certain level of journalistic inquiry from me. So in early 2011 an even took place. Some called it moniker gate. As I understand the situation you breached protocol at Moniker, looked up an owner's name for domain name under privacy. The domain name was ChefPatrickSucks.com. Is that roughly correct on the order of events?

Patrick: Sure what you said is a true statement. It was a personal in nature domain I felt. Knowing the individual I am obviously not going to say the person's name but knowing the person and thinking that they were a friend and some events that occurred I took it as a huge insult and for me I know I was a Moniker employee but I'd been self employed for six or seven years. And I guess for a moment I lapsed that I was an employee. I'm just not used to that. And it was about my brand. Chef Patrick was something that I created about three years ago and I am very protective of. If someone questions my

work ethic or anything related to the brand I take it personally. I made a personal mistake and honestly would I do it again? I don't think I'd do it the same way but I think that that person would have known that I knew their name.

Michael: Yes that makes sense. And just learning from that lesson myself I went out and bought DomainSherpa Sucks just to get it out of the way and make sure that I've got my bases covered. Anybody watching this can learn a lesson. If you want to protect your brands go do it. And as we have seen from WikiLeaks and some of the other sites (B of A went out and bought tens of, if not hundreds, of domain names around the brands that they own with the word sucks attached to it). Just to make sure that they own it.

Patrick: I love it. Honestly it's amazing how many domain names were registered from that instance. You say yourself but it may have helped. It brought more awareness to privacy protection. It brought more awareness to the industry. And I'll tell you that a ton of Chef Patrick subtype of domain names were registered. I even registered PatrickRuddellsuck.com. Eatfoodsucks.com.

Michael: So were you let go from your position at Moniker because of the incident or did you leave on your own?

Patrick: We left on great terms. I think you can see that. If you go to ChefPatrick.com right at the top right hand side there is a premium banner from Moniker. It shows their support there. They have been a big supporter of DNCruise. They came last year and they are coming again this year. And those two instances happened after I left the company. Craig Snyder is coming again. He was a great speaker last year. A great participant and he is going to do the same again this year. So those things just don't add up if I left on bad terms I don't see why they would throw money at me and sponsorship and attend an event that I am holding.

Michael: Right so I think the industry in general hopefully is advancing in protections and security as a result of the incident. But let's move on to a more interesting topic...

Patrick: This isn't my first scandal. What is this? This is Moniker-gate?

Michael: Right Moniker-gate. Was there another gate before the Moniker?

Patrick: There was nipple-gate. Were you around for nipple-gate?

Michael: I was not! What was nipple-gate?

Patrick: You were not in the public eye yet. I think you were still in the background. But nipple-gate, when I was doing the female models for my videos (and this caused a lot of controversy) I hired a gorgeous model and she wore body paint. So she wore the body paint and she didn't have pasties on. It was a little cold. We were doing a video and it was Wyatt (? 21:04) Parker who had fun with his great sponsorship, but we did nipple-gate. And that video had, oh my God I want to say close to at least 5,000 to 10,000 views. It was something I posted on my blog because You Tube shut it down for the nudity. But it was funny. It caused a lot of controversy and my wife was in the room. There was a female photographer in the room, a female make-up artist in the room. This is my second 'gate'. I have to figure out what the third one will be.

Michael: We will see what we can go to start a third 'gate' maybe on DNCruise this year. We will get to that. I also want to ask you what your wife thinks about the models that you have on the video series that you used to put together, but first I want to talk about science fiction.

Patrick: Sure.

Michael: So at the end of 2010 you purchased and launched ScienceFiction.com. We talked about your interest in science fiction, on genre. It was a business related decision. How did you first hear that the domain name ScienceFiction.com was available? Did it cross your desk or were you seeking it out?

Patrick: Actually it crossed my desk while I was working for Moniker. I had a client that had purchased fiction.com for \$98,000. I helped broker the deal. And he came to me a week later and said, Patrick I also want

ScienceFiction.com. I kicked in the price and I reached out to who owned it which it was owned by Domain Capital. I reached out to Domain Capital and said, hey how much you guys asking for the domain name? After some talking and negotiating we had it to \$175,000. After he just made a \$95,000 investment on something that he actually could develop for a full year. His plans were to launch it in 2012. It didn't make sense for him to make almost a double the investment for another domain name that is a completely different genre than fiction. It was funny because we debated. He said well I own fiction.com, it's better than science fiction and I paid \$90,000 why would I pay \$175,000. We disagreed and eventually he seen my side of things. That science fiction was a much bigger genre than fiction is. So he did buy it. Long story short I waited a good 90 days to really pursue it. I fell in love with it as soon as I seen it like I said. I knew there was a cult like following for that. And that is what you need to get readers coming back every day. So I let it sit for 90 days. I contacted Domain Capital on my own - inquired if it was still available. We started negotiating terms. I had to have it. I just had to have it.

I was looking for that staple premium domain that I could put my name to because I hate to say it in this industry you got your doers and talkers and I have never been one to be just a talker. I wanted to put my seal on the industry or whatever I could do. And the only way to do it is selling premium domain names, which I've sold close to \$4,000,000 in domain names with Moniker on my own buying and selling and buying a premium domain name. So I had to make the jump and do it.

Michael: So you negotiated the price down for your buyer at the time to \$175,000 for ScienceFiction.com. What was the original asking price of the domain name from Domain Capital? Do you remember?

Patrick: I honestly don't remember the asking price but I know that it was appraised for around \$250,000. And this was back when Monty was there and Moniker was doing appraisals. So it was appraised for \$250,000 so I see I was getting a value. And I was an end user. I know I paid an end user price on the domain name. I didn't get it at a \$50,000 steal. I paid a real value for the domain name. And this is something that I tell domainers every day where end users just as much as anybody else. Just because we are a

domainer doesn't necessarily entitle us to get a discount on a domain name we want. So I had to pay the price.

Michael: And did you determine that the \$175,000 was a fair value because of the appraisal that they did or did you use your own formula or gut feel or run it by other brokers in the industry in order to determine that that was a fair price?

Patrick: I'd say it was 100% gut feeling. Everything that I have done in my life has always been gut. I don't think there is a better tell out there. So I used my gut and hopefully it leads me in the right direction.

Michael: And for \$175,000 that is a lot of cash to outlay. Did you finance it or did you pay for it outright?

Patrick: So we got it from Domain Capital and they also financed the domain name for us. I can't speak to my exact terms because we are under an MDA for our financing. But I will tell you that the standard on their website is a minimum of 40% down and 15% interest, or something like that. Those are the standard seal of public information. I can't go into my specific finances with the domain but I know domain deals where they do make exceptions.

Michael: ScienceFiction.com I think launched in December of 2010. Is that correct?

Patrick: Yes we launched I think a couple days right before Christmas. And really we kind of rushed to get it out only because I had a contact at TechCrunch. And TechCrunch promised they would give me coverage but they kind of wanted to do it on the weekend. Like for them it wasn't this big news story. And I completely respected that. Whatever I could get I was happy to get. With TechCrunch there was 10,000 hits that day from the site. So I was more than happy to do it any day of the week that they wanted. So we rushed to get it out. We got it out – I want to say it was two to five days before Christmas. And so technically you are right - right at the end of December but it was well worth it. The traffic that we received from them. It

went from, it was getting under a 1000 visits a month. I want to say like from 250 to 500 per month. And we got it up to over 40,000 our first month.

Michael: And so just to go over one more point about the purchase from Domain Capital. In the pre-interview you actually told me that ScienceFiction.com was owned previous to you making the purchase but that the deal fell through. So I guess Domain Capital had sold it, it was financing it and something didn't work out. Was that the case?

Patrick: Correct. I don't actually know the previous owner of the domain name but Domain Capital did foreclose I guess you could say on the domain name. I don't know what other domain names they are holding in foreclosure but it is a basic principle in financing, you don't pay your bills they are going to foreclose on the property. Again it is so easy for me to wrap around because of my real estate background so they foreclosed the property. Maybe they got a better deal than the \$175,000 than an end user would have because I knew the ins and outs of it but they were happy to offload it and it was going to a good home. I mean we had multiple conversations and plans of what we would do with it. They weren't just trying to offload it, they wanted to know future plans and developments and ideas and so forth and hear that we had a passion for it.

Michael: And so because the site was previously owned and run did you purchase it and find that you actually had traffic coming to the website as a result of the previous website that was there?

Patrick: Like I said it was under 1,000 – you know Domain Capital didn't share any statistics with me whatsoever. Before hand it was some type of an Amazon product page for science fiction videos and so forth. So they couldn't share any status because it wasn't on their server from the previous owner. But I can tell you I want to say it was easily below 1000 if not below 500 visits per month.

Michael: And so you bought it. What was the original vision for ScienceFiction.com? When you were having the discussions with Domain Capital with what you wanted to do what was your original vision?

Patrick: It was very clear. Just how I had built ChefPatrick.com something I had never done before was build this online media for the domain industry. And I was able to turn ChefPatrick.com into a \$50,000 a year paying gig essentially. And it is a small niche. We get maybe 30-35,000 visits a month to the ChefPatrick.com. So I wanted to apply those same philosophies and principles to a larger genre, niche in science fiction. And I always knew it was going to be a new site. I always knew that we were going to be covering the science fiction TV shows or the movies coming out of the comic books, the science fiction books anything. And mentally I toyed with the idea of maybe adding a market place to it. And who knows maybe years from now that may happen. We will add a marketplace where we can sell T-shirts and mugs and DVDs, books anything science fiction related. But for now the focus has been, provided as good a content as I know how in the industry and let the users come from there.

Michael: And since you have been launched and up and running for about seven/eight months has the vision changed at all?

Patrick: You know it hasn't. We have kind of steady and I think we have because we have seen the traffic grow. And that is the most important thing is watching traffic grow from maybe 40,000 to last month we hit the 50,000 mark which was a big goal. Our next goal is 100,000. And us reaching 50,000 there are so many things that we did wrong and still got that number in a very quick – in under six months. We were very close to that three, four, five months. So I know there is a lot we can do. We don't even have ourselves on the Google News Feed actually. So that is just a simple addition that I can do that is going to boost our ratings in Google. You know I have heard from some sources that can actually double my traffic just doing those minor things.

Michael: Yes, I think Elliott's blog has said that when he made the switch to including unique numbers in his URL and getting onto the Google News Feed that that brought a ton of traffic to his website.

Patrick: We set up the URL to automatically have the date and post settle so it has that unique number. We did the research ahead of time. Honestly I don't know why I haven't just submitted it. I think it was we haven't

officially launched. It sounds silly but we haven't launched yet to the community. The only launch we did was TechCrunch and then everybody picked it up in the domaining industry because to them that was domaining news. So we are getting ready to ramp up. We are actually going to do a slight redesign. I hired a comic artist so they are going to design and hand draw a nice background. We are going to make some tweaks to feature some of the TV shows and content to get a lot of traffic. We are going to highlight the authors, the actual writers that do work for us because they want that self promotion as well. We are going to put up the Google News Feed and then we are going to do some press releases. And I think that will – I know press releases doesn't solve everything but that is really going to put us in the community a lot more than what we are right now. For right now it has only been through word of mouth either Twitter or if someone read it on TechCrunch.

Michael: I'm going to come back to one of the comments you made about making mistakes and still hitting 50,000 unique visitors per month. But let me ask you a few questions before that. How many people do you currently have contributing to ScienceFiction.com?

Patrick: That is a good question. We have one full time girl that contributes three articles a day. Sorry bear with me. Six right now not including myself. I think I have written two things and they were all site related. I do actually want to get back into writing. So let's just say add me seven. I put out a Tweet last night because there is a new show coming out tomorrow night for Torchwood on Stars and I put out a Tweet for this. The writers I have aren't actually going to watch the show or don't have Star's network. And I got a dozen responses on Twitter saying we would love to write for you, here is my email address, here is my resume, here are my writing samples. So I know social media.

If you know who I am I built my brand on social media so we are going to be adding, I believe we are going to be over a dozen writers in the very near future. There are a lot of shows coming out. There is a lot of new comic books coming out, a lot of games constantly coming out. So as we learn, and this is all about learning, this is not my niche, but as I study the traffic I'm learning what people are reading, what tv shows they like and if we have got

a good tv show we will dedicate a writer for that tv show that will watch it, live Tweet, recap it the next morning and then throw in a good piece during the week saying why they love a specific character or top ten reasons to watch the show, top ten reasons why I hate the show, whatever it is those types of articles do really well for us.

Michael: And that is all great sort of editorial tactics for anybody thinking about starting their own website. You can pretty much take exactly what you just said and go execute on those and have some great success. So let me ask you a few more tactical questions. What publishing platform are you using for ScienceFiction.com?

Patrick: WordPress.

Michael: So it is a straight WordPress theme, straight WordPress CMS implementation and then you are using one of the themes that you liked and you have said that you are going to customize the theme with a background and some new graphics in the future.

Patrick: Correct. We took a theme, it was a ready-made theme, but I made some tweaks to it. I will be honest I like, there are a couple sites that I personally liked as far as design and that was Mashable and TechCrunch. And both of them are pretty clean, simple looking and we did mirror some of the same things. And I'm not going to say steal because there is nothing wrong with mirroring something that is successful. And those two sites are tremendously successful. TechCrunch sold for \$25,000,000 just less than two years ago. So we are going to keep some of those same social elements in there. The buttons, the middle layout and the clean simplicity, the whiteness in the middle but where we will add a little bit more attention is the buttons that we are going to do on the right hand side for the shows, they comments, some certain games - things that have strong followings. The writers and then that custom background, but for the most part we are going to keep it clean.

Michael: Great and where do you host right now?

Patrick: I have my own server just for the site. It is Iweb.com. I think we are paying, I paid it for the year, I'm going to say it is about \$220 a month. And

anybody who does development and wants a major project like this realizes there is an extreme benefit to having your own server. You can really tweak out things – load time is extremely important to Google. Because we have the fast load times, because we have the tremendous content, we write very well very quickly, of course the premium name doesn't hurt. But where science fiction wasn't ranking first ten pages before we have brought it to number three almost instantly. Probably within 60 days.

Michael: And it is an interesting data point for those people that look at Matt Cuts video from a few months ago when he said we might think about tweaking our algorithm so that exact match domain names don't do as well. They do do well.

Patrick: I don't know if that is the political answer or what but I'm sorry if you typing in science fiction, science fiction is going to come up before xsciencefictionbestwebsiteintheworld.com. It is just going to happen.

Michael: Especially if you are building a real business and you are publishing great content on the topic. It is one thing if you buy a premium domain name like science fiction and you are parking it or you have your website up with one page that has some affiliate links or something and it is another thing to build a magazine out of it.

Patrick: It is a combination. It's a domain name and content. You are not going to get it just off the domain name but it certainly helps.

Michael: So you said that you are approaching 50,000 this month, is that correct?

Patrick: Last month we had 50,500. This month we are actually on pace to hit about 55,000.

Michael: Unique visitors or total visitors?

Patrick: Total visitors. I think unique is a third of that number.

Michael: And what kind of page views do you have for that kind of traffic?

Patrick: Pages are, last check was 250,000. But I think it is up around 300,000 page views.

Michael: Great so people are coming and spending a ton of time reading a lot of articles.

Patrick: Definitely.

Michael: And have you sold advertising on the website?

Patrick: No actually I haven't monetized the website at all. Part of the new redesign is strategically placing some advertising, some ads. So we are going to try with the Google ads. You know Netflix is a great ad where if someone signs up for free you get paid \$15-\$20. So some things like that. Also I'm, personally going to reach out to advertisers. I specialized in advertising with Chef Patrick. At one time we added (laughing 40:32). So I'm going to bring those skills to ScienceFiction.com and sell some advertising.

In fact we had Stars Entertainment reach out to us during the launch of Torchwood and they had an ad budget for a ten day window and just for fun I asked the advertising agency and asked what is your budget? She said \$25,000. I said oh okay so this is for all the sites. She said not this is just for your website, our budget is \$25,000. I almost fell out of my chair. I really until that moment I didn't realize what these people were paying. So for \$25,000 they want the background. You see it on the other websites. They want the background. The movie releases, the TV releases, they want the background. And unfortunately we were under 50,000 visits when they approached us. I think they wanted to see 100,000 plus.

But we are in the right direction. So that gave me a lot of hope. And I didn't want to approach advertising or monetize too early because it was all about building that audience that comes back. I didn't want to offend anyone. Science fiction people are very sensitive. Like I said it is a cult like following unlike any other industry, even more than domain names. So we are going to start playing with it and aim it toward monetization now because in all honesty our bills are \$2000-\$3000 plus per month just on content and so

forth. So we have a lot of work to do and we need to start turning those bills into a positive thing.

Michael: Yes, definitely. So \$2 or \$3,000 a month in expenses, does that include the financing that you are paying for the domain name?

Patrick: Yes at around \$3,000 plus it does include... We are paying about a \$1,000 a month on content and again I can't disclose the exact payment but it brings us in \$3,000 plus a month.

Michael: How long do you anticipate you to reach profitability? Do you have any idea?

Patrick: I strongly believe we can make \$3,000 plus a month very quickly. I definitely believe that within the next six months. Again I haven't made it a priority to monetize. I think once I put us in the Google News... I do a little but more social media. I actually just started doing the social media myself and taking over that project and I have seen traffic grow. With those two things, strategic content (you have to write specific pieces that go viral) I really believe that we could be at 100,000 plus visits per month in the next 90 days if not 60 days. But it is going to take a lot of work. So I am reshifting my focus to making that a huge party. When you get to 100,000 that is not critical mass where people are just going to come back, re-tweet, more people come and it just goes viral. And I think that is the point where advertisers say okay they are getting serious traffic let's start to pay real money.

Our biggest competitor is IO9.com. I think at one point 9,000,000 per month. So we have a big potential.

Michael: Yes, definitely. So I have a publishing plan on DomainSherpa. A new article for entrepreneurs and new domain investors every Monday and an engaging interview like I'm doing with you for newbie to experienced domain investors every Wednesday, a news summary every Friday. When breaking news like the ICANN vote comes out I launch a new article on that. What is your publishing plan for ScienceFiction.com? I think you said that you have at least one writer that publishes multiple times per day. But how do you set up that publishing plan?

Patrick: I think we try to post content every two to four hours. We do somewhere between four and seven articles per day. It really just depends on what our writers do. My partner is our editor in chief as well and writes some content. He manages our writers for that aspect. We have certain pieces that we do on Mondays. You know you have got Falling Skies that comes out Sunday night. We are going to have that recap Monday. True Blood or even though Smallville is cancelled. So the shows that are on Sundays, Tuesday, Thursday the following day we are always going to have those recaps. So it is a constant flow. We are always going to have that I call it repeat business coming back to check out those recaps. And then we have got those interesting articles like Monday. It is a simple article but what science fiction movies did well over the weekend? So Transformers this last week sold \$95,000,000 in sales at the box office. So we do an article like that every Monday and those do well for us. People want to know that interesting information.

The TV shows really are a steady thing. Movie box reviews and also what is coming out on comic book stands. So I think comic books come out Wednesday (I am not a comic book guy) but I think they come out on Wednesday so we have our comic book writer who is strictly comic books, he posts on Tuesday what you can see in the stores the next day. He then goes out and buys maybe five or six of them and he reviews them - His favorites. He puts those on the site right after so Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday you are going to get reviews of the comic books that he just released the day before.

Michael: Fantastic. I admit I used to collect comic books in high school. I loved them. I think they came out on Thursdays down in L.A. and I used to ride my bike down with my best friend. We would check out all the comic books. We would go back to one of our houses and read them. And then I ended up selling all the good comics from my collection in college when I needed beer money or something, it was really bad. So your partner that you mentioned is Dirk Van Tilborg, is that correct?

Patrick: Correct.

Michael: And he is the editor in chief so he is in charge of what gets published on the website, he does some writing, he manages all of the writers that you have on staff. How do you classify the responsibilities between yourself and Dirk aside from those that I mentioned for Dirk?

Patrick: It's a pretty easy outline. You have got content – Dirk, everything else - Patrick. So social media, keeping the website up and running...I do deal with some of the writers. Obviously I pay the writers myself with our business funds. So I handle all the accounting. I do deal with the writers. I do get us new writers because he is focused strictly on the content. He will go out and he will map out that we should have these ten to twenty articles this week. He will give them to the writers. Some of the writers provide some of their own content. But it is a great partnership because he knows what he is doing and I know what I'm doing and it is our job (if we are going to be successful) we both have to do our part. And he has a journalism degree so it is a great partner to have. He is a huge science fiction guy who owns hundreds if not thousands of comic books and books about science fiction. He is a little older than I am. I won't say his age. I don't want to offend him but he has been doing this a significant longer time than me. And this is a great marriage for the two of us.

In fact I met him...Again a lot of this came through with Moniker. I worked with Michelle Van Tilborg. She is the marketing director for Moniker in the local office here. And that is her husband. She is a friend of mine and I had told her about the project that I had thought about taking it on and a light bulb went off for her and she said my husband. He would be perfect for this. He works from home. He can do this. He's got a journalism degree. We met and I tell you we solidified our agreement within hours of meeting.

Michael: That is great. It is so difficult to find partners that you can trust for a business so that is fantastic that a mutual acquaintance or a friend put you in touch and you hit it off. Do both own equal parts of the business?

Patrick: Pretty close to equal. I don't want to give out shares of the company but pretty equal, I'd say pretty equal I'd say.

Michael: So you have got authors that you are paying a \$1,000 a month accumulative for all the authors. Some of the authors are probably writing longer pieces, shorter pieces, multiple pieces per day, do you compensate per article or per word or pay per article?

Patrick: I don't want to pay per word. It can get extremely costly. I've got one girl that will write 1,000 words and she wants .05 per word. I just told her that I couldn't do that. It doesn't make financial sense for us. But I said listen I'm going to pay you x amount of dollars per article and I don't want to say her pay in case one of the other writers are reading this. So they do get paid a little different. It is not a significant amount. It is more a labor of love. But I didn't want to say I am going to give you x amount of dollars but you need to stay within 300 words. No, I mean you can't. Some stories go 1,000 words, some stories go 150 words if it is just a quick news blurb.

Michael: Right and if they are passionate about the topic and the series, they want to do a good job on an article they may write more words and may be happy to do that.

Patrick: Exactly.

Michael: How do you make sure that the editorial quality of what they are writing is good a month from now as it is today?

Patrick: That is a good question. It is a challenge. I think it's heavily reliant on trust. I built a relationship with the writers that we have. One that I believe I have grown a friendship with even. Our writer Christine, which loves a lot of the vampire type shows and the fantasy stuff she has known my wife for, I don't want to tell my wife's age but she has known my wife for 20 years. So there is that trust there. And I know that she is not going to go anywhere. And if there is she needs to give me significant notice. And the other people that I have found they are really good at what they do. Our comic book guy we are very reliant on him but in return what we have done is we have said comic books is yours. So it is kind of like he owns that portion of the website. And that is one of the tweaks that I want to make on the site is to really premier that writer so it is not only just building that comic book section but it is really building him as a person. And that is what they want.

Michael: Definitely. They want to be the Chef Patrick of the comic book section on the premier website for science fiction.

Patrick: Exactly. This is the place. If you are going to write for any site, there are tens of thousands of sites in this industry. But you want to be on the site that is number one, two or three in Google. You want the premium brand. When you say I write for ScienceFiction.com you get that instant credibility with a premium domain name that the writers take advantage of. They get a Brian@ScienceFiction.com or Dave@ScienceFiction.com. So when they email a comic book company or a movie company they get results. And I know from owning a premium brand I went to a local science fiction show (a small show just 3,000 which in our industry that is huge) I met Telemundo. I said hey I'm CEO of ScienceFiction.com and their interest just peaked. I had several interview requests that we denied some interview initially.

Now that we are getting ready to launch...Like I said we haven't launched, so once we get ready to launch I'm going to be doing a ton of interviews. I've actually been offered a couple of newspapers, local newspapers, to do some interviews. So I am really excited. And I think we will do something on Telemundo and some of the other fan's sites. I think this niche is ready for us. I think they are excited to have us here. Our biggest competitor will be besides I09 is cyfy.com and there is just this huge revolt against them because first of all they are using syfy when they also own cyfy.com. So they shifted to that brand that the culture hated. And they are cancelling a lot of their good sci-fi shows. So they need us. It's almost a matter of need just as much as we need them they need us to provide good quality content.

Michael: So you brought up a very interesting point that I just want to reiterate one more time for people that (and it was the same point that Steven Boal the CEO of coupons.com brought up a couple of shows ago) when you are creating a company and you are building a real company like you are doing with Science Fiction creating the magazine, if you can capture the premium domain name that gives you so much clout right from the beginning. Right when you go up and introduce yourself to a representative of Telemundo or Sci-Fi Channel and you say I am the CEO of ScienceFiction.com it really does pack a punch. So I just wanted to reiterate

that point one more time because I think it is something that a lot of businesses don't value enough or as much as they should. They will decide that they will buy myScienceFiction.com.

Patrick: And the analogy that I like to give that is very similar is take like an officesupplies.com. If I call a business and I say I am officesupplies.com the first thing you think about is this tremendous warehouse with office supplies. This guy must be working at a big company and he has got all these resources that he is going to ship all these wonderful products to me, a drop ship company. But you get that credibility just because of the name. It is nice to have. Even in our own industry it has been a side effect where people just say hey that is Chef Patrick. Now it is all of the sudden Chef Patrick he owns ScienceFiction.com. It is kind of you get paired up and that is my new wife is the domain name. You kind of get rated based on what you own.

Michael: Definitely. So a couple more questions about editorial tactics. Do you edit all articles, or does Dirk edit all articles before they go live on the website?

Patrick: I'd like to say he does but I know for a fact that not every article is. We are in a time crunch sometimes that when you are posting four, five, six or seven articles a day I know he is going back to school for continuing education (getting his Masters in his field as well). Some articles do slip the cracks. And some of them are writers that we would have thought would have been perfect there are some typos. Typos and so forth or images. I will go in, my wife will go in, he will go in and after we see them posted we will make those corrections. A lot of times the writers do. We are not perfect. You are not going to come to ScienceFiction.com and get perfection. We can work to that. I know we can work towards that goal but the first twelve months are critical. We need to get up content. And not just the amount of content we need to get quality content. And we try as best as possible within our means with the writers that we have. And all of this will improve over time.

Michael: So we talked earlier about the coverage that you received on TechCrunch and I think you said you received 10,000 as a result of the

article. You received that coverage on TechCrunch because you had a contact, a writer friend at TechCrunch. Is that right?

Patrick: Kind of. I had met someone through Twitter, again social media, something that I did, so I knew this person on Twitter through Chef Patrick. And I also noticed that he did a story for Adam on Logo.com. And I said heck now I'm looking at his writing and he does write a lot about domain names so I pitched him the story. He said sure I'll write something up for you. Like I said it was hey I would do it but it has got to be on the weekend when we don't have strong coverage. And that was what I could get and I was very happy with it. It gave us somewhere between 6,000 and 12,000 visits to the site. I don't remember the number it's been awhile. It was a few hundred Twitter and Facebook followers right off the bat as well.

Michael: Do you think you would have received that coverage if you wouldn't have publicized \$175,000 purchase price of the domain site ScienceFiction.com?

Patrick: Probably not. I'd like to say that the name carries its own weight but putting a six figure dollar amount to any domain name makes it a news story. And being honest I think that made it a story and I think they also published that it was a domain foreclosure. In that sense those two factors made an interesting story.

Michael: Great tactic for those thinking about starting up their own website. Look for the interesting tidbits that a writer will latch onto and want to write about.

Patrick: Exactly.

Michael: Okay let's switch our attention to another project that you have in development. DN Cruise, Domain Name Cruise. This is your second year sailing. Is that correct?

Patrick: It is.

Michael: What is the purpose of DNCruise?

Patrick: In all honestly the first year was building my brand. Again I'm a brand guy. I've always had domain names that were brandable. I still have tons of brandable domain names. So it is about building the brand and solidifying my place in this industry. Everybody want to be a part of the industry and I will be honest I want to be a significant person in the industry. I'm not going to say it is at a point where I want to be an expert. I'm not going to claim to be an expert in this business. I've failed numerous times. But that is what makes you good at what you do. You learn from your failures. So I did it initially to build the brand and to try something different. I brought video to this industry. I was one of the first people to come up with the weekly video and people have followed suit. Even like yourself, you do video and it does very well for you. So it's always been what can I do different than everyone else is doing. Even when I was in real estate I said if everybody is walking that way you walk the other way. But I'm not on land, I'm on a boat. That is definitely walking the other way.

And the second year was more, because I had such a great response, so this year I'm not as concerned about building the Chef Patrick brand. I'm really not. I'm not as concerned about being in the public eye. I don't blog anymore. I've actually enjoyed my privacy. You are scrutinized a lot less for those failures. In fact I haven't blogged about my recent failures because you know what, I don't want to be scrutinized. But it is more for the industry now. I don't make a significant amount of money and you factor in the amount of hours that my wife sits here at the desk calling Carnival to make the reservations for the guests (because we do everything for our guests from start to finish). It is more of a labor of love and what I can do for the industry. I want to be a significant person in the industry but I also believe in promoting our industry. I believe in doing what I can to help our industry succeed further than what it is. We are so small.

And little things like, I hate public speaking. But if I was invited to a local business group to talk about the meeting I've done it. I did it in Tampa Bay. I've taught social media and I've taught Domaining 101 and thinks like that. So anywhere I can help I want to. And I think DNCruise is a unique environment that no other conference, I don't care. DOMAINFest is an amazing conference for what it is. You have been

there you know. Traffic, I have my differences with Rick but it is an amazing conference that he puts on. So I have nothing negative to say about the event. But it still cannot offer what I offer. And that is you put 50 to 75 people in a small area that have no choice but to spend time with each other and do business and learn to together. And it produced results that I didn't even expect.

And I think that the biggest compliment, if you've seen the testimonials, Ron Sheridan who was one of the founders helped start Oversea, he started DOMAINFest and his biggest compliment to me was on a video this is the best networking that I have ever had at any even including my own DOMAINFest.

Michael: And I can understand that. You get a smaller group of people together for an extended period of time you are going to get to know almost everybody in that group and you are going to create a tighter bond with those people and feel more comfortable calling them up afterwards. And asking them questions about the value of a domain or what they should do with it or how they ScienceFiction.com up and running. All those sorts of questions.

Patrick: Yes, everybody got to know each other's first names. You can't do that at DOMAINFest. In fact we ran a competition the first day. And this is something that you can't do at DOMAINFest and Traffic everybody came up and introduced themselves and talked about themselves. It wasn't an option. You go to Traffic you got the podium, you want to go up and give yourself a one minute pitch that is an option. This is not an option. If you are on the boat you have got to come up and speak about yourself. And there were people who hate public speaking, myself included, so much so that when I first started speaking I cried for like 10-15 minutes. Morgan Linton has got a video out there of me crying like a baby. It was an emotional thing for me. So I hate public speaking but everybody had to do it. The competition was at the end of this round, which took a good two hours to meet everyone, if you can remember his name you get an Ipad. Crystal Peterson from dotco she didn't write it down, she didn't take notes, at the end of it she came up and points at everybody one by one by one and remembered everyone's name. And I would say that there were at least five people in the room that could do that but I only had one prize.

Michael: That is amazing she remembered everybody's name. So when is the cruise scheduled? What are the dates?

Patrick: It is September 5th out of Tampa, Florida through September 10th. And we are going to make stops in Cosmo, Mexico. Which we were supposed to last year but we were re-routed for hurricane season to the Bahamas, which I was even more excited about because it meant that I got to beat Ammar Kubba with Trafficz to that island because they did a round table there. So I got to be the first person there. And then we are going to go visit Frank Shilling in Grand Cayman. Frank is an awesome guy. You have interviewed him.

Michael: A fantastic guy, yes.

Patrick: He actually invited us to his home. And appreciative as I am I don't think that we are going to do that. What we have done is we have rented two large boats that can handle the traffic. So we will have two large boats that will actually take us on a three hour tour with Frank Shilling. He will be with us the whole time. We will stop for snorkeling. I think we have three stops for snorkeling enough to see the sites. And at the end of that we will have like a two hour lunch at one of the local restaurants with Frank. And again that is just another unique situation. I reached out to Frank when we first said that we were going to do a cruise this year. I said to Frank I want to come to Grand Cayman, because I had talked to him about coming last year and he just doesn't like cruises. And I don't blame him. That is fine. Not everybody loves the cruise ship environment. But I wanted him to be a part of it. So I said listen I'll do anything I can so much so that I had to leave out of Tampa, Florida where last year we did it in Miami. And specific dates. We had to take a specific ship just to make sure that we got to Grand Cayman to see Frank. And he was very awesome about the whole thing.

Michael: It sounds fantastic. So what did you learn from last year's cruise that you will be changing for this year's cruise?

Patrick: I may not change anything. I've know you have talked to previous guests. Anybody in this industry has talked to previous guests can say

nothing but good things about it. We had just great structure. Or lack of structure even. I am not a professional event coordinator. Although we had a guideline, and I call it a guideline, it wasn't an agenda. We had a guideline of what we were going to do. Heck we bumped speakers for more networking. And I said you know what we are not going to be able to use you as a speaker on this cruise. It wasn't that a speaker was coming just to be a speaker which happens at other events. So I wasn't afraid to bump a speaker because networking was more important. And we gave those options to the guests. We said hey guys do you want to do this or do you want to do this right now? And then we dispersed and actually did a ton of networking at a certain period. Games nights were a huge, huge success, just playing charades or Jenga or Pictionary. Games like that. You mix in a couple drinks, you are in a conference room, we had a bartender that comes in and brings drinks for everybody, which we had sponsors for. And it builds this camaraderie. It was just so awesome. Put them on teams and everybody was rooting for each other. It was just a blast. There is not much we can change to make it better, really.

Michael: That is fantastic. How much of a day let's say is speaking sessions and sort of knowledge and how much is networking and how much is like fun, like game night?

Patrick: I'd say it was 50/50. Last year we only had one day at sea. So I guess that is the one that they were going to change. Last year we had one full day at sea. And I crammed in eight speakers in eight hours. We had back to back to back speakers, lunch, back to back. Phenomenal speakers! We had David Sams which helped launch Oprah Winfrey, Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy. He launched .tb, he launched .cc, so tens of millions of domain names with those. He was our key note and he will be back this year. Him and his lovely wife had an amazing time so they wanted to come back. So we crammed in that. So what we are going to do since we have two days at sea, one thing we did add is to go to Grand Cayman we added another day to the cruise (we didn't – Carnival did). That gives us two days at sea. So I don't want to just cram in two days of people talking and speaking. Again that defeats the purpose. So my wife had a great idea. She said Patrick let's just split the day. Instead of cramming one day for speaking and one day for networking let's split it. So one day at sea we are going to do four or five

hours of networking, four or five hours of speakers and the same thing the following day.

And some things we have got different than other conferences, we have got an all girls session. So Lisa Bloom, she is claimed a New York Best Selling Author, engaged to Braden Pollock which is great at lead generation domains. He's made millions with that. But Lisa Bloom will be there. She is an attorney, a best-selling author, a public speaker, she has a TV show. So we have got her.

We have got Lori Ann Worde. We've got David Sam's wife who is amazing at what she does. She is an autism councilor I believe or a physiologist. So we have got this group of women that actually want to get together and have their own session. So my wife is going to have that up and they are going to do, one of the mornings when the guys can sleep in a little late, we will let the girls get up early and have their own session. So that should be fun. More of the same last year. Networking. We all eat together. Dinner time is at 8:00. We are all sitting together. Now you can change seats of course but we are all in the same area. We are forced to sit together. Same for lunch and so forth.

Michael: And so do you think that most of the people coming on DNCruise are more advanced domain investors or do you see novice and intermediate domain investors coming as well?

Patrick: A complete mix. Last year we did a show of hands and 50% of the room had never been to a conference before. That is what I targeted. You have got to have your core. Fifty percent of core people who have been in this industry for awhile. Right? We have got Greg McNair, Morgan Linton, Craig Snider, Donny Simonson from Parked, a great core of people. But I needed to mix the energy of new people. When you come into a business you are so excited. You have got this energy. You want to learn. We have this female Peggy Plause. She came last year with so much enthusiasm and wanting to learn. Sharron Haster. These are people you have never heard of but they have a big passion for this business and they want to learn as much as possible. So 50/50 is our mix. And we are going to hit the same this year. Actually 50% of our guests last year are coming back this year. More than

50%. Some couldn't fix their traveling schedules. We also have 50% of the people who have never been to a show before.

Michael: That is great and that is a great testament to the cruise the first year if you have such a high renewal rate. So what kind of topics, what kind of sessions can people expect if they come on DNCruise? What will they learn?

Patrick: Braden Pollock is going to cover some lead generation stuff for us. We have got Craig Snyder who did a phenomenal job on drop domains, drop and leading domain names. I mean he kicked out some statistics I don't remember right now. Ron Jackson even wrote up Craig doesn't get an opportunity to speak a lot and he did such a phenomenal job that Overseas really needs to take a look at Craig and say wow we need to put him in the public eye because he is a great speaker. He demands the attention. We've got Greg McNair that can talk about affiliate marketing. And Parked Donny that is going to talk about parking. David Sams is going to come back and talk more about online and media and launching and then what he has done with extensions. I can't say that we have the whole thing figured out yet. This is just a good thing that I am having my own conference. I don't need to be the typical - Traffic needs to put out their agenda really eight months in advance. Or DOMAINFest has to have the agenda. We didn't have the agenda published until the day everybody got on the ship. Kind of the same thing here. People, I don't want to say that they trust that I am going to do a great job, but it is kind of what it is. They know that I am going to put on the best show for them. They are going to get their most money's worth. It is about networking, really getting to do business. But there is a ton of great knowledge. We talked about everything from ccTLDs to TLDs to Parking to Dropping Domain Names, Development, everything last year. We are going to do all of that and more this year.

Michael: And having such a small group of people allows you to find the person who is an expert on a topic that you want to learn more about so that you have in-depth conversations like you and I are doing right now. So that is another advantage. So it sounds like a fantastic event. And Patrick if people are planning on registering and haven't done it yet or they watched this video and now they are thinking about registering what is your cut off date for registration?

Patrick: I almost say there isn't necessarily a cutoff date. It is more so when the cruise sells out. I think we have currently 60 guests signed up now, 45 who are active participants, which last year we had 75 and about 50 active participants in the show. So we are about 60 days out. I really think we are going to exceed our last year's numbers easily. I've gotten two requests this morning for more information, they are going to book. One is from the United Kingdom and one it from Italy. Some people are actually traveling from all over the country to come to this event which is very cool. So it is more so when it sells out. It is not me. It is Carnival's control. We just did a rate increase on July 1st. Not my choice. I would love to have pricing at \$499 - \$500 or whatever I can do but the rooms cost more. My profit margin in this is honestly about \$75 to \$100 per guest and that goes right back towards the short excursion we are having with Frank Shilling. Luckily Escrow.com has stepped in and they are going to sponsor the lunch which is pretty cool. Definitely lessens the burden on me. So I would just say you have until the cruise but don't wait because really cabins are starting to sell out. I know they have sold out certain decks already. So I would say within the next – by the end of this month.

Michael: So don't wait. If you are thinking about it it sounds like a fantastic event. Go book your room now. Patrick I want to finish up with one last question. We were talking earlier about you are going to exceed 50,000 visitors per month. You said that you accomplished that feat even when you made so many mistakes. Can we finish up talking about one or two of those mistakes were and what you would do differently with 20/20 hindsight now?

Patrick: Sure I think the first mistake and we already addressed it is using that Google News Feed. A huge mistake right? And again I am going to make that adjustment but instead of self-correcting right then and there I decided to do it when we do the launch which is in a couple of weeks. We don't have any SEO done. There is really no SEO work done on this website. So I am not an SEO guru but I know some friends who are. And we are going to do some consulting and figure out a good SEO approach.

Right now we are three in Google. I don't know how easy it will be but we should be number one. There is no reason why we are not number one.

Wikipedia is number one right now. That shouldn't be. The number two site is sfsite.com. The domain name doesn't even say science fiction. I know we are going to be able to beat them pretty easily. I did look at some brief SEO analytics and I seen some things that they are higher than us on. Obviously their length and their links, but I've seen a lot of green in our area and more positives than them. So I am very confident that within the next 60-90 days we will at least move to the number two spot.

And social media. I don't want to say we failed at social media in the beginning but it is kind of one of those things that my expertise is. We had somebody else taking care of that for us and they weren't doing it properly. So I am starting to take that role over now. And just in the last 24 hours I think I have grown Twitter 50 followers. I mean 50 may not be a lot but it is an extra 50 that come back a few times a day.

Michael: Well if you can get a percentage of those to come back because they are watching their stream on a regular basis and that is extra page views, that is extra visitor sessions.

Patrick: And re-tweets. Science fiction people they love re-tweets and we have done tons of re-tweets and likes. And that is one of the other changes that we just recently made that I think was a mistake is I didn't know the power of that like button before. That like button is very, very powerful. We added that and I seen traffic go up by about 3,000 adjusted a month because of it.

Michael: That is amazing. And with 750,000,000 on Facebook and you know that science fiction fans are going to be connected with other friends that are science fiction fans and they like it, their friends see it. It is a powerful strategy. If you have a follow-up question for Patrick please post it in the comment below. We will ask Patrick to come back and answer them. If you would like to follow Patrick on Twitter, what is your user name on Twitter, Patrick?

Patrick: Too you can do @sciencefiction which is more for that realm.

Michael: Sciencefiction (one word) on Twitter.

Patrick: And @chefpatrick. That is my personal feed.

Michael: And so I would recommend that is people are interested in following the development of ScienceFiction.com they should follow sciencefiction on Twitter so that they can see how you are developing the site, what kinds of titles you publish and how things are developing. They may have a premium domain name or another domain name that they want to develop themselves. Patrick thank you so much for taking the time to come on the show and share an enormous amount of data about science fiction, what you have accomplished, some setbacks you've had and we wish you all the best luck on DNCruise. It sounds like a fantastic time.

Patrick: Thanks so much, Mike. I really appreciate it.

Michael: Thank you. Thank you all for watching, bye.

Watch the full video at:

<http://www.domainsherpa.com/patrick-ruddell-sciencefictioncom-interview>