

How Examine.com Is Collating Scientific Research for Public Consumption - With Sol Orwell

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Today's guest has launched dozens of online businesses and retired as a result of his success. But retirement to him and your definition of retirement might not be exactly the same. Find out how he retired and what premium single-word generic domain name was exciting enough to pull him out of retirement. Stay tuned.

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Michael Cyger: Hey everyone. My name is Michael Cyger, and I'm the Publisher of DomainSherpa.com - the website where you come to learn how to become a successful domain name entrepreneur and investor directly from the experts. Today's guest graduated with a Computer Science Degree, but does not practice computer science. He is retired, but is not relaxing on the beach. He has had health issues, but is one of the healthiest people around, and he is the Director of Enthropia and Publisher of Examine.com - a website that provides independent scientific information on supplements and nutrition. Today we are joined by Sol Orwell. Sol, welcome to the show.

Sol Orwell: I am very happy to be here.

Michael: Sol, there is so much to talk about with you. I am not even sure where to start, but I think we will start with your professional background first.

Sol: Sure.

Michael: Some of the things I read about on your blog, at SolOrwell.com, include that you were in the massively multiplayer online gaming (MMO) space in virtual currency before World of Warcraft right when World of Warcraft came out. You were in online directories before Google decided to slap all those directories down. You were into CSS when it was cool, before it became a commodity and a lot of people started doing it. And you were doing local before Google decided to local as well. So, prior to your current venture at Examine.com, in your opinion, what was your biggest professional accomplishment?

Sol: I would have to go way back when with MMOs. I was involved in MMOs. Basically, EverQuest and Diablo 2 when all those came out, which is like the early 2000s and late 1990s. And back then, the concept of taking real money for what was virtual and just a bit of binary code on someone's server was quite insane. I mean even now, today. I was never a big MMOer myself, but the idea that you are a busy individual and you do not have the time to get the level 100 sword or whatever, and I know some kids who do. And I pay them ten bucks to buy their sword and you pay me a hundred dollars to buy this sword. I mean it was just one of those when you are still in the industry,

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you are thinking like: "Is this really happening?" Every day, you wake up and you go: "Are people actually paying me this much money to have these virtual items to play this video game? And why is the video game itself not involved?"

I mean the industry has now been around for 15+ years and it has evolved a lot. Gaming companies are involved in it now and whatnot. So, it was really interesting for us way back when to be involved in selling these items and these currencies. And what we did a bit differently than everyone else was doing was we started becoming part of a community. So, we started buying websites. We started building our own websites. And we were never afraid to say, "Hey, we are gold sellers," what they used to be called back in the day. And we were kind of like: "Yeah, we sell currency. We sell these items." There is definitely a for-profit aspect to it. But if you want to know how to be the best (Unclear 3:41.0) impossible, the website that we run, that we are paying for, and are basically subsidizing with our sales is the single best website you will find on (Unclear 3:50.4) and whatnot.

So, even now, I have kind of been involved in that actually for seven to eight years now. But even now, looking back at it, it is just one of those things where you just shake your head and you go: "Those were the heavy days when the idea was new, where the idea of paying ten dollars a month was kind of crazy." One of the fun things about MMOs was their peak audience. Their most busy day of the year was actually New Year's, because that was what was important to people. So, I have to go with MMOs as kind of being the most bizarre, I think would be the right word to use in terms of what I have been involved with.

Michael: Yeah, so your business was buying low and selling high. So, maybe it was people that came back from war and they were on leave at home. I remember reading an article in Entrepreneur.com or Inc. Magazine, or something like that, where people would come home, they would spend six months off, maybe they train at a base in the United States, and they play a lot of MMO games. And then they would get their orders and they would head back out someplace, and they would have all of this armor or gold, or whatever, and they would need to sell it, so they would come to a marketplace like yours to sell it.

Sol: Exactly. I mean we were basically middlemen. We were never involved in either acquiring or any of the direct parts. We were in transition period. We basically went from A to B, and we were the middlemen who made it happen. And pretty much anybody who has a busy profession. There were lawyers. There were doctors. Like you said, people on leave. People who did not have the time to invest out. I mean these people were playing these video games. They will easily spend eight to twelve hours a day, which to you and I that sounds like: "If I had that much time, I would just sleep," but they love this and eventually they would want to, because these (Unclear 5:42.8) different. If you are a Platanos, it means you are like a warrior and healer, if you want to be a healer, like the game changes. So, eventually, let's say you kind of win the game, you are bored of it, and then you want to restart. Well, what do you?

Michael: Right.

Sol: So, we would buy the full character. We would buy the item and yeah, we would flip it over to somebody who did not have the time.

Michael: So, you said that you were a marketplace. That you did not actually do the purchase. Would you purchase it for X and then own it for a while, and then sell it for X plus Y to some other person?

Sol: Well, a part of the fun with this was that there was a lot of technical legalities between us. You were never allowed to actually sell the items themselves. You had to sell the time that you used to acquire the items.

Michael: Oh, wow.

Sol: Or what you would do is let's say they did not allow you to sell currency, so you would create a new character. The new character would meet up with who is selling the currency. You would put the currency into the new character, and then you would sell the entire character off to whoever was buying it and then they would transfer the money and stuff like that. So, there was a lot depending on how they had the game setup and what the terms of service were like. You had to figure out ways to make it happen. But yeah,

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nowadays, I mean it has become kind of a professional organization. People have staffs of 20, 30, 40, or 50 that are in China or Mexico, or some other third world country where labor is pretty low. And basically these people play professionally. They harvest the gold and then they sell it directly to the end user instead of dealing with buying and selling. They are only in selling.

So, we did not do that kind of stuff. We were just involved in the buying and selling parts.

Michael: Got you. And what was the exit from that business, Sol? Did you sell it to somebody else? Did you sell it to your partners? How did you get out of that business?

Sol: Yeah, it was a bit of both. It is in my nature not to stay around in one industry for too long. I like the challenge. I like trying something out new. And so, in my case, I had a Co-Founder, let's say. A partner that we used kind of for the technical aspect, and I dealt with everything else. So, I eventually kind of sold my portion over to him and, at the same time, he merged his operations with a wealth-funded company that was in other games. So, they kind of merged and became like a super website, let's say, that would sell these kind of items. And yeah, that is that.

Michael: Was that your most successful exit? Did that give you the most freedom when it comes to working and choosing when you work?

Sol: Yeah. I mean in terms of revenue, definitely that crushed it. It was, again, right back in the day when margins were much easier. Traffic acquisition was the hard part. This is back when AdWords did not even exist.

Michael: Yeah.

Sol: And it was a baby. So, it was one of those where the margins has been squeezed, like most things are online, or you have to work a lot more on your brand and kind of your following, and stuff like that. This is before even Facebook existed. So, yeah, in terms of amount of effort put in and getting your money back though was definitely the highest (Unclear 8:38.6) for me.

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Michael: What was the revenue per month or per year at the hay day of the MMO business that you helped run?

Sol: I mean I would say we were clearing at least seven figures a year, and that would be, again, our margin, let's say. Actual revenue was of course a lot higher. Even then, we were never the biggest ones. A part of it for, again, me is just kind of a little bit of laziness, kind of just dabbling, kind of enjoying. So, I knew all the other big guys very personally and I mean the biggest guys were easily generating eight and even some of them were worth nine figures in terms of how much money they were pulling off in currency and virtual games.

Michael: Very cool. And I also read that you previously owned Beat.com and Webmaster.org. Is that a couple of other websites that you ran for a time?

Sol: Yeah, that was actually my entryway into the domain space. Again, I was always dabbling. I was always doing interesting things. One of my favorite ones actually was - so, I bought the domain eLook.org. And there were all these various free databases online. And I purchased them. We are talking about like a hundred dollars, two hundred dollars, nothing expensive. So, I purchased them all. I put them on this one website, eLook.org, and it was a search for everything that was on it. So, there was recipes, nutrition, video game database, or whatever. And then I hired a student in high school and his full-time job for the summer was to submit listing to DMOZ.org. DMOZ.org, for those who do not remember anymore, was let's say the dominant directory. And it is still around. It was originally owned by Mozilla, which made Firefox and Netscape, and now it is owned by AOL.

And Google used to love it. Google's issue always is to figure out who can I trust in terms of who they are linking to, and DMOZ was one of those ones that they fully trusted. They, in fact, had it duplicated on their own on the subdomain. Directory.Google.com was a clone of the (Unclear 10:46.5) DMOZ. So, what I had was this kid just submitted every single possible listing from our site into DMOZ and, by the end of the summer, we had 300-something listing on DMOZ.

Michael: Wow.

Sol: Just to let you know, even one was considered a success. If you have two or three, you were a ruler of something. And so, I took that domain I bought for maybe a hundred or two hundred dollars with a couple thousand dollars for the student for the summer, and then that site with its 200+ DMOZ listings was getting like 20 to 30 thousand visitors a day, and then I flipped it for like 40 or 50 thousand. So it was that kind of mindset that brought me into domains. So, Beat.com was one of those domains that I bought and flipped it pretty much instantly within six months. Webmaster.org I was actually build something out, but again, something else. I do not even remember now what, but something else came that was interesting to me and I was like: "Okay, I am not going to have any time on Webmaster.org. Let's flip it and sell it."

So, yeah, that was my introduction to domains. I was never a big domainer per se, but I always understood the value of domains and kind of what they can do for you.

Michael: And did you understand that because you, I believe, got your degree in Computer Science so you understood how the Internet worked? Am I correct that you got your Computer Science degree?

Sol: Computer Engineering.

Michael: Computer Engineering, okay.

Sol: (Unclear 12:09.7) looked down on computer science.

Michael: Exactly. They are just writing code. You are building this computer.

Sol: Exactly. Exactly. And we do systems and all these other big architectural words. In the context of domains, I was a little bit cynical compared to most of the domainers, but I was more optimistic compared to non-domainers. At the end of the day, especially nowadays, branding is everything. I mean we look at auctions, for example. eBay has nothing to do with (Unclear 12:35.6) auction. And even if you have Auction.com, you might work on a niche, but you are not going to slap them off their podium. They are something else. There are classifieds that (Unclear 12:44.3) and whatnot. So, I always

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understood the value of domains in terms of: "Hey, it is easy to remember." I mean hey, I can remember X domain. Webmaster.org. I mean, again, it is a .ORG, but it had this very memorable domain name.

So, did it bring me much profit? No. Did it directly contribute to my success? Maybe; maybe not. But I knew that indirectly it was easy to remember and the ability to type it in and whatnot was a lot easier. So, I am not necessarily the biggest fan of throwing two hundred thousand dollars at a domain and thinking this is going to be my success. Domains should be like ten to twenty percent of your budget, maybe. There is still a lot more to be done, but if your budget is big enough to get an awesome domain, then absolutely. If you look at Hotels.com, they are not successful just because they are Hotels.com, but they advertise it everywhere. They spend a lot of money pushing the domain, and that kind of works and helps with each other.

Michael: Yeah. So, how many domain names do you have today in your portfolio?

Sol: Not much honestly. In terms of .COM and .NET, I have maybe like one hundred. Nothing very valuable. I do have a nice collection of Philippino domains and New Zealand domains. This is an odd accumulation. New Zealand was always kind of where I wanted to end up in, so I mean these domains that I own in New Zealand and Philippines are not meant for, let's say, hauling and selling. My New Zealand ones, I would ideally like to develop them down the road, once I allot more time. And in the Philippines, my number two kind of runs operations deals with the service and all that. He is an American who lives in the Philippines, and so our goal has always been we have contributed sites that are owned by Philippinos and run by Philippinos in their space, and we just happen to have a time that was right. I think it was 2003 or 2004 when we kind of picked up a lot of the best .COM.PH and .PH domains they have.

Michael: Got you. And so, for the New Zealand one, I think a lot of people want to go and retire in New Zealand. It is a beautiful country. My wife and I spent a month there a few years ago and actually my brother-in-law is a kiwi, and it is just a beautiful area. So, are you planning on starting a windsurfing company there, so you own something like Windsurfing.co.nz?

Sol: Well, the thing is I love the outdoors. I am a hardcore camper, like I do (Unclear 15:11.2) camping. I have done survival camping. We have done where you go into like three feet of snow and you do not bring a tent, and so you have to build your own kind of emergency (Unclear 15:19.6) and that kind of stuff. So that is the appeal of New Zealand to me. And so, in that context, I mean again, this was stuff I did maybe eight to ten years ago, where I was like: "Okay, eventually I will move to New Zealand and then I will build some kind of Internet." Back then, that is when the rollups were big and popular. Internet.com and the name slipped me, but there is now this (Unclear 15:42.4) Sharp Media that owns a lot. That owns Deals.com and owns RetailMeNot, which is the juggernaut of the coupon space. There is also the company that owns Web Hosting (Unclear 15:51.6) and a lot of Webmaster sites. Again, this is like ten years ago when rollups were getting popular.

Michael: Right.

Sol: So, I own Sports. I own Movies.co.nz. Lawyers, Attorneys, and stuff like that. So, my goal was always to have the largest Internet-based company that deals in a lot of spaces. I do not know if I will ever get down to that, but I love moves. I love sports. I hate lawyers, so maybe I should stick to them somehow. So, that is why I have kept those and then we will see what happens.

Michael: Gosh, so you are just going to hold on to it and if life takes you to New Zealand, you have got some domain names that you can now build a business on top of.

Sol: Exactly. Like I have absolutely no intent. I have sold one Philippino and New Zealand domain in the last ten years, so it is not even an investment vehicle to me. It is something one day I would like to be able to build out and say. I mean I have reached a stage right now, at least in my life, where being cooler or doing cool things are more important, so yeah, hopefully I can do something cool with them later.

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Michael: So, I went to Enthropia.com and I can see that you have got Examine.com and you have also got a business listed on there called DealCatch.com. What is DealCatch?

Sol: So, Enthropia.com is pretty much, let's say, defunked. I just put up the domain. I incorporated it in 2002/2003. So, DealCatch was back when daily deals were hot and getting steam. And because of my experience in local search, I knew that white labeling was a big part of success. So, basically, Local.com is kind of the juggernaut in it now, but you white label your search results with local directory to newspapers, to radio stations, to TV stations, and whatnot. So, when deals were gaining steam, I built an aggregator for myself and friends of mine liked the aggregator, so I built out the aggregator a bit more and that was what became DealCatch. And the idea was eventually to white label and whatnot, but I got sidetracked with Examine and daily deals kind of imploded on themselves. It is amazing how much Groupon and Living Social used to pay versus what they pay now. So, I guess I am glad I got sidetracked something else.

Michael: Yeah, so it is built and it continues to harvest deals, right? Because I went to DealCatch and I went to Seattle, and I saw deals that looked like they were active. Is it still active?

Sol: Oh yeah, it is absolutely active. I mean we send out like 50 to 60 thousand emails a day. So, it is being used by people and, of course, it is funding itself just fine, but it just one of those projects that is running and there is not a lot of effort needed to delve into it. The numbers of daily deal companies that are coming up now have pretty much zeroed. More of concern is ones that are dying. You have got to make sure you move them or that are no longer related to mobile or that are more just online deals. But yes, I guess that is a decent example of something that runs itself that is profitable on its own and that does not require. I mean other than depositing Commission Junction's checks and whoever's checks, like my daily involvement with it is pretty much zero.

Michael: Yeah. Do you have to determine which deal sites are going to funk so you could pull them out of your scraping process or your partnership?

Sol: We have alarms and systems set in place. So, hey, there are no deals for a week. What is going on? Like is it dead? Is something going on? Hey, wait a minute; the IP has changed. Does that mean they have changed their hosting or does that mean they have gone out of service? Is it a parked page? I mean product companies at times get pretty smart with some of these domain (Unclear 19:30.1). So, they buy up domains, but they see what is being hit and they make sure that it is getting a proper response. So, there is like five, six, or seven different measures we have in place. And if any two or three, or plus, alarms are triggered, and then you do a manual review. But even then, I do not do that. It is, again, my second in command in the Philippines. That is his job to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Michael: Got you. All right, so I want to shift the conversation a little bit and move from your businesses to your retirement. So, we have had a conversation - a pre-interview - before and Chris Crowther actually introduced us and said that I need to talk to you because you have got this lifestyle that is fantastic, and you work when you want to work, and maybe you work a few hours a day and maybe you do not. How is it that you have had, it seems like, a lot of successes in the online space, but I cannot find any indication that you have had like a 20-million-dollar sale of a company or something like that? How do I reconcile the fact that you are retired and you work when you want to work, and you go to the park and you read when you want to read? You do not answer to anybody. You have this freedom, but I have not seen an enormous exit.

Sol: Well, I mean the real essence of it is, I guess, what is retirement to you. So, I am an immigrant. I moved to Canada when I was fourteen, and so I am very lucky. I was lucky I was born to my specific father, who was able to get out and whatnot. I have seen people with a lot less, and so my definition of retirement is not necessarily that I am wealthy or that I am even rich. It is that I have a very nice and stable income that does not require me to put more effort into building out, if I do not want to. So, I have had VCs come after me. I have been in the lucky position where I mean I have rejected over a dozen VCs that wanted to invest in various things I have done. So, yeah, I do not have a big exit, but that is because that is not something that has driven me.

So, I mean I could have 50 million dollars. I mean I might not, right, but I could have it today if I was willing to put in those fourteen-hour days and all that. But to me, what is more important is autonomy and being able to do what I want to do when I want. And so, in two weeks, I am going on vacation for three weeks to Peru. I do not have to worry about why am I going or customer support, or I have to manage a team, or anything like that. So that is what retirement is to me. So, I have worked my ass off. To use that phrase, I mean I honestly did. When I was in University, I went in with a full scholarship. I lost that bad boy within the first semester because I was focused on building my business and I spent twelve to fourteen-hour days. I have done that.

But when you hit that fork in the road where, hey, do I want to be making billions a year, which if you want to is cool. I mean I have nothing against that or, in my case, making a decent chunk of change and you do not have expenses. You do not have debts. You do not have anything really. I do not live a really flashy life. I do not even have a car. I live in Downtown Toronto. I love walking. I love biking. But that is part of who I am. So, in that context, retirement became quite easy. It is like: "Am I making enough money? Do I have to put a lot of effort into continuing making this money? No, I do not. So, could I do what I want when I want? Yes, I can." And it was those decisions and that thought process that led me to saying I would rather be retired and be able to do what I want than not.

And let me be very clear. For the past six months, I have worked my ass off. I am kind of off that retirement chain. It is not making me a dime in money. In fact, it has lost me quite a lot of money so far, but it just one of those things where, again, I thought about making something cool, so I have got the time and I do not treat it as a job. It is not something. Again, if I want to go for three weeks, I will. I have vacationed at least three to six weeks this year already, so if I am taking two to three months a year to do what I want, I think that is a decent balance.

Michael: Yeah, I think a lot of people would think that is a decent balance. In July 2011, you wrote on your blog that you went from about 35% body fat to 12% and you wrote that you are scheduled to hit 9% in the next six weeks. What is your body fat percentage right now, Sol?

Sol: It is 10.2%. I have to admit. I recently had a DEXA, which is like an MRI. I am an engineer, so I track all that stuff. In fact, I just do not have Alexa's results back today from my yearly ones. Yeah, I am a little bit ashamed I did not hit it, but I have got to admit I love food too much. So, in terms of priority, that kind of fell to the wayside.

Michael: Still, that is pretty significant. I saw, on your blog, a before and after picture, and I cannot even recognize you as being that same person.

Sol: Yeah. Yeah, I think it was the haircut. Everyone who sees that picture especially make reference to my questionable haircut. I believe that the haircut and a little bit more grooming and the slightly better-fitting clothes has done a lot more. I will admit I have also had jaw surgery, even though in that after picture I had not, but I needed that because I fractured my eight front teeth when I was a kid and it was time to fix that. So, I was in Argentina and then I was in Manhattan. And in Argentina, they let you online delivery of ice cream, and it was extremely cheap. And you order a half a liter of this and half a liter of that. It was like dulce de leche con brownie and chocolate and whatnot, and they deliver to you within the next fifteen minutes and you just eat it all that same day because you are going to have to repeat the process tomorrow, because you are supporting the economy or whatnot.

So, it was a lot of unhealthy eating that was involved, but yeah, I came back to Toronto and I cleaned up my diet. I focused on being a little bit healthier, lifting weights, and whatnot, and that was eventually what led me to Examine. So it was more my hobby became my passion; became hey, let's build something cool again.

Michael: So, I know people that take supplements and they swear by them. I used to be one of those guys. When I was training for triathlons, I was doing a lot of lifting. I was taking a lot of supplements, because you can eat, but you want to make sure that you are getting all the nutrients that your body needs in order to grow and grow stronger. And I remember how much money they were. The energy drinks. The hydration drinks. Like everything involved. How much do you spend on supplements per months, do you think?

Sol: I do not actually spend a lot. My one weakness is I like. So, at any given time, I will have like six different whey proteins at my place for different flavors. So, I like mixing them with Greek yogurt or whatnot, or even sometimes when I am having cereal, I will just throw it in the milk. So, I like the taste, which is why I spend money on these whey proteins. Do I need them? Not at all. I mean I could just eat. I love eating meat and all that too anyway, so I can get my protein that way too. I just happen to like the peanut butter flavor or the cinnamon flavor, or whatnot.

In terms of actual supplements, I mean yeah, there is a lot of money spent. A lot of money spent on useless stuff. And part of what we are very proud of is that on our site we do not actually sell any supplements ourselves. We have no affiliation with any supplement companies. And one of the things we would love to be able to do is make a dent in the entire supplement industry. So, an easy example is Glutamine is sold as a muscle builder. And they will say, "Hey, scientific research shows Glutamine will make your muscle so it is bigger, bigger, bigger." And two things. One: Glutamine is a 600 million dollar per year industry, which for one amino acid, that is quite something.

Michael: Wow.

Sol: But the other beautiful thing about the scientific research is that it was done in petri dishes. So, they were injecting Glutamine directly into muscle cell tissue, and then muscle cells can grow. But in the real world, when you and I inject Glutamine, our small intestines love Glutamine and they basically sequester it all for themselves. So, none of it actually ever gets to your muscle cells. The only two exceptions are if you are doing ultra marathons. I am talking about like 50 miles or longer at one time. Then your small intestines run out of Glutamine reservoir, so they need more. It is not like they are helping muscles grow. It is that they will strip your muscles of it. And the other thing is if you are a severe burn victim, or if you are in the hospital ICU burn victim. That is the only time you need Glutamine.

So, the idea that I can make a dent, or we can make a dent, in the 600 million dollar industry that is a complete waste for at least 550 million dollars of that, that is kind of what excites me. That is kind of what got me into

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supplementation. To be able to say: "Hey, this is all a waste of your money. You do not need these supplements, and we will show you what can work." But in general, these general recommendations of multivitamins and this and that is almost like a ponzi scheme is what I say.

Michael: Yeah. If Glutamine is 600 million by itself, 0.6 billion per year, how much is all of the supplements?

Sol: Well, I mean there are estimates for ten to fifteen billion a year. Part of it, of course, though is: do you consider those meal replacement Slim Fasts a supplement, or do you consider that a meal replacement?" So, in the context of me using whey protein, is that me using it as a supplement or as a flavoring agent? So, there is a bit of also vagueness in terms of how you use it, but yeah, I would say ten to fifteen billion dollars is a very reasonable number to put on how much we spend on supplements. And at least two-thirds of that I wager is a waste of money. And if we can make a dent like that, that would be pretty cool.

Michael: Yeah, that is enormous. All right, so this is really where I want to spend a bulk of the time; is on Examine.com. So I want to start from the beginning so people can see the evolution to where you are today, Sol. When did you actually buy the domain name, Examine.com?

Sol: So, Chris, our mutual friend, of DNX.com and all that. So, okay, I was getting pretty healthy, and I realized that there is a lot of new smart people on these forums and message forums and whatnot, but you lose that knowledge within the week.

Michael: Exactly, and it gets buried and there are bunch of "idiots" that get on there that confound the discussion about what is useful and what is not useful.

Sol: Yeah, there is a lot of it is actually true. And when smart people come out and they write a long essay, let's say, saying this is why you do not need Glutamine, they are not going to be partial in writing it again. And that information was getting lost. There was a lot knowledge getting lost, and I am a very active participant in these various areas. And so, there was this guy

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who was graduating from Dietetics and I said, "Listen, you can get your PhD whenever you want. Why don't you and I build something cool?" And so, then the hunt came. What kind of domain do we want? What kind of representation do we want when people think of what we do? So, our original envision was simply we are going to research supplements, we are going to build a supplement database, and then we might get into exercise and stuff like that.

And so, in that context, we did not want something too specific, like let's say Supplements.com or something like that. We wanted something that was kind of giving you a sense that we are looking into the research. We are trying to make sense of what is and what is not. And even though our general space is health and we are starting off in supplements, it is not the only thing we are necessarily going to stick to. And so, that is when I was talking to Chris and Chris was like: "Hey, I have got Examine.com," and pretty much that was it. We talked about it and I think 24 to 48 hours later it was a done deal. And that actually was all done when I was in Panama, when I was hanging out with him and I said, "Hey." We were talking about what is next or what are some projects you want to do. So, I always had (Unclear 31:37.9) at the same time and I mentioned this with one of them, and that is kind of where the domain name came from.

Michael: Got you. I see in NameBio.com that it sold May 12, 2011 for 41 thousand dollars. Was that your purchase?

Sol: Yes, that was my purchase.

Michael: Okay. And I also see that it was under WhoIS to Media Options, Andrew Rosener's company. Was he a middleman to do the deal?

Sol: I honestly do not know. Not even a no comment. I honestly do not know. It might have been under (Unclear 32:10.8). I do not know. Maybe he was hosting it. I do not know what was going on, but I do know that it was Chris's domain when I bought it from him.

Michael: Got you.

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Sol: And Chris and I know well enough that between him and I there was not even an escrow. I just set the money. I got the domain. Done. End of story. It was never (Unclear 32:28.9) have the funds clear. Like I have known him for like ten years also, so there was that comfort level. So, yeah, we got the domain.

Michael: Hey Sol, let me stop you for a second. How did you determine that 41 thousand dollars was a fair price to pay for Examine.com? A word that has a decent amount of search volume, but not a lot. It does not really define a product or service, and would be useful for a website that has supplement information, maybe some medical information or some exercise information. It does not really stick out to me as like yes, that is the keyword-defining domain name.

Sol: So, the thought process was basically that in fitness, especially in nutrition, there is a lot of what we call Bro Science hanging around. But Bro Science is kind of like a very colloquial phrase. It was not something that we want to associate with our primary brand. So, there is all this information, all this garbage, all these people who do these superficial looks at studies and whatnot, and they make these big claims. So, it is very common in a study, if you read it, like if you go to PubMed, which is kind of the clearinghouse, it will have what their hypothesis was, a little bit on their methodology, and a conclusion, and that is it. But what is really important is we have to actually go into the full paper. You have to go to the methodology. You have to see. Variances matter. If the average gain was a kilo, let's say, but people lost 15 and other people gained 15.

There are a lot of nuances that you have to get when you actually go into the papers. And our motto and our approach was always that we want to examine the evidence. Evidence-based fitness is a phrase that has become very popular now, but three years ago it was not something that anyone really talked about much. So, our viewpoint was we do not want to use the word evidence-based. We do not want to be like: "Hey, look at us, we are bourgeois and using big words and whatnot." It is that we want to examine what the evidence says. And so, in that context, Examine.com made complete sense, and it was also one of those that had the potential to become a verb. Like: "Hey, do you have any questions about Creatine? Examine it." It very

easily led into that idea. And I will admit every time I start on a project, I have all these grand visions of what it is going to do and what it is not going to do, so that was part of it.

And the inverse of it was: even if the website was a failure and I was stuck with the domain, is it worth 40 thousand? Is it worth 35 thousand? Is it worth 45 thousand? Even if I take a slight loss, that is acceptable. At that time, Chris had two other domains that he was (Unclear 35:14.9) kind of in a package. And when I found out he had Examine, it just made so much sense to me in that context of what are we doing, how will we eventually use that, how will we refer to it, and in fact, that 'examine it' that I mentioned gets used a lot. People ask on Twitter all these (Unclear 35:33.3) to whatever fitness models. Someone will tweet at them, saying, "Hey, what do you think of Rhodiola Rosea? What do you think of Vitamin D?" And they go: "Hey, you should just examine it," and they do not even mention our domain. They do not mention anything, but that 'examine it' has become a phrase that is used by people in fitness. So, it was a bit of a gamble in that way, but it was worthwhile. And in my head, I always thought I could flip it for 30 thousand if I needed to, so was it worth that extra bit of premiumness? Sure, why not.

Michael: And when you looked at the domain name, clearly you looked at Supplements.com, which is actually owned by Nature Made today. I am not sure if they owned it back then. But did you make that analysis in your head? Should I go for a keyword-specific domain name like Supplements.com or should I go for an alternate generic like Supplements.info, which you could have bought, or MySupplements or MyExamine? Did you ever consider those different options before you settled down on Examine.com?

Sol: So, I definitely considered, let's say, the pure generics. Supplements.com. Let's say Fitness.com, or whatever. Those were actually considered. But again, my concern was that we would get eventually pigeonholed. And it is a good thing we did not go with Supplements because we talk about nutrition a lot and we would have, again, been pigeonholed. (Unclear 36:54.0) stuff like MySupplements or Supplements.info absolutely not, especially nowadays, in the last four to five years. I have cut my teeth doing SEO way back when, when you could literally buy one-page rank nine or eight link and you are top five on Google for whatever. So, nowadays

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especially, SEO is very brand-based. I mean they might not outright say it. It might not have an outright impact on it, but how many Facebook likes do you have? How many Twitter followers do you have? How are people interacting with your brand and whatnot?

And stuff like MySupplement and Supplements.info is absolutely illiterate to me. I am a .COM guy straight through and through. CCTLDs are the only other attraction, but since we were not local, there was no sense in buying a CCTLD or buying anything even smart or funny. Let's say there was .TS, so Supplement.ts. There was no appeal in that for me either. It was just I need something that can be branded, that can make sense in the context of what we are going to do, and thus Examine.com was the one that made sense.

Michael: Got you. So you bought it around May 2011. How long did it take you to build the first version of Examine.com?

Sol: So, right now we are in Version 5.5, and so the original version, especially if you look at Archive.org, you can look it up. It was very simplistic. It was very easy. I am a big fan of rapid prototyping and about getting a site up instead of making it perfect and sinking tens and tens of thousands of dollars. I knew that our bread and butter was going to be our knowledge. It was going to be the information we had. At the same time, I also knew that my co-founder was still a little bit young and he needed time. He needed a lot of that practical kind of experience. And so, building something this huge and envisioning this massive thing, while nice with the eventual plan, it would not have helped us. We needed feedback. We needed feedback now.

So, I built a very simple system. He started putting information. And as he ran into issues, as he ran into: "How do I manage this," and was becoming a bit cumbersome, I would iterate and then evolve. And then, as we got a bit bigger, I think we hit 500 visitors a day. That is when Version 2.0, Version 3.0, and then all that kind of eventual progression to what we are right now. And Version 6.0 is the next big one for next year, March or April, which will be our full three-year anniversary, let's say. So, yeah, it was a very (Unclear 39:14.1) process.

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Michael: How long did it take you to build Version 1.0, which allowed your partner to input information, which is the key to Examine.com? Having all that information in a database that allows you to display it and organize it.

Sol: Right. Oh, a couple weeks. Again, it was not very fancy. I have done websites like that, so I did not have to spend any effort building up a user system because I knew what I was doing anyway. So that took maybe a couple hours, if even. So, it was more just figuring out what kind of areas of supplementation we wanted to talk about, and that has morphed so much since we first started. But the general rule was that we want to talk about doing some markup code and make sure everything interlinks. A very, very simple design just, again, to get the data out, even get Google indexing it. That was kind of it, so yeah, couple weeks maximum. Maybe even a week to ten days.

Michael: Did you build the website yourself, Sol?

Sol: Absolutely.

Michael: So you coded it yourself. Even though you are a hardware guy, you came down to the software level.

Sol: In computer engineering, we have the skill set for both, so hardware, software, virtualware, VMware, or whatever you want to call it. We can deal with all of those. So, I did have to stoop a little bit, but yeah.

Michael: Why did you decide to code your own rather than just using WordPress off the shelf or Joomla?

Sol: It was just so much overhead, and then eventually, if it does grow, then you have to grow out of their system and you have to kind of fit. I mean at the essence, we are essentially a database site. He inputs data to a database and then we kind of play with it, and then we spit it back out. So, WordPress content-based systems would make no sense, and so essentially we would even say that our first version was a very simple interface between the raw data and what you saw. And then as we grew and we started interlinking papers and saying, "Hey, if you are looking at something X, you might want

to read about Y," or, "Here, this is an FAQ question on this and you might want to look into this supplement," that was all natural progression. And the other really important reason I like programming myself, or I like being involved, is you see things that you would not normally understand.

So, as I was programming it, and thankfully I knew my supplement information and all, but as I was programming it, I was like: "Oh, it would make sense to do this because it will make his life easier when he wants to do this." So, being on the ground level I think is really important when you start. Now I have a CTO. He is doing V6. We are going over the specs. Now I do not have to deal with it. But when you first start, I am very happy that I have got a jack-of-all-trades kind of skill set, so I can do everything and fully appreciate what is working and what is not working before I bring in specialized people who kind of take it to the next level.

Michael: Yeah, makes sense. And I like the way you have done iterations. I think a lot of people, especially domain owners that do not know a lot about development, think that they need to do what is commonly referred to as a waterfall process, where I need everything to work right from the beginning and here is everything that needs to be done, and I am going to go spec it for somebody to work on. And then, halfway through, the developers lose track of the entire process and it is just too big. You launched small. You go it up and running. You started to store data in the database. You had an interface and you displayed it. So, Google could see that you are growing over time, you have got great content, and other people can find it useful.

Sol: Absolutely. We had shared notes between my co-founder and I as we grew. We solicited user feedback all the time. I mean especially now, when I look back and see where we are and where we are headed towards, you can see things that we wanted, but you can also see so many things that we had never conceived that we would have to deal with. And so, yeah, I do not understand when people spend all this effort into these huge projects, especially nowadays when you have APIs and white labels, and all this kind of stuff. Getting a site live, okay, maybe it took me a little bit quicker, but a couple months and you should have something out there that you can then start driving traffic to. You have to know what is working and what is not.

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I am a very analytic guy, so we know. We are using Crazy (Unclear 43:20.4). We use Optimizely. We use Qualaroo. We use (Unclear 43:22.8). We use all these different softwares to know what people are doing and what they are finding useful. Are they clicking on these links? Are they not? Did I have that when I first started? No. Did I start building that in as we iterated and as we got simplistic feedback from Facebook, from email, from Reddit, and all these sites? Yes. Are we a lot more sophisticated now? Absolutely. But just to get right off the bat, getting some feedback is so critical and it just boggles my mind how people have these huge condominiums that they want to build when these companies have built a condo their first time. They built some houses or they built a shed, and then they worried about the condo down the road.

Michael: Right. So let me ask you. You paid 41 thousand dollars for the domain name. You had understanding of how to develop it. You did the development yourself, so there was no cost to develop the website. You got a website, hosting plan, you coded it yourself, and that was working. And then you had a partner that you mentioned. What is your partner's name?

Sol: Kurtis Frank.

Michael: So, Kurtis came on and he was studying diet and health, and so he is sort of the subject matter expert. You were too, but you used him primarily as the subject matter expert who was putting the content into the database. Was he a partner right from the beginning? Did you pay him a salary? How did that work? So, the thing with me, especially with the health, was that I was part of these various websites. People knew who I was. I have never been shy about who I am, and so people knew that I had done this kind of stuff and they knew I had lost a lot of weight. And him and I would have a lot of discussions and I would ask him for clarification. What does Ghrelin do, which is a hormone? What does Leptin do? All of that kind of stuff. So he knew that I knew more than, let's say, 99.9%. He might be at the sixth significant digit; I might be at the three significant digit, but him and I knew each other.

And so, when the time came where I said, "Hey, we should build something that holds the repository," he had this understanding of who I was. I was not

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some guy coming in out of nowhere, saying, "Yo, you should work with me." It was: "Hey, I have these skill sets. You have this skill. Why don't we work together?" And his reality was a bit different than mine. So, I need to make money off of Examine.com and he obviously needed a source of revenue, and so of course, yeah, he was the co-founder, but we scaled it so that the primary revenue at the beginning all went to him and whatnot. Even though I was in charge of, let's say, business and I almost controlled his salary and all that kind of stuff, I knew I was taking a loss for a year to two years because this is one of those long-term plays. We were not selling supplements and stuff like that.

So, he has of course ownership, but he also had, or now he definitely does, but he had a stable revenue off the bat so he would not say, "Hey, I am just being used also by this guy and I am not making any money," and here, down the road, he tries to pull something fast on me.

Michael: Got you. And so, how did you structure that with respect to the equity in Examine.com? Since you had put up all the money to begin with, do you own most of the equity or did you share some of the equity with him to begin with?

Sol: Oh, I absolutely shared the equity, and we also had a very clear understanding that we were not, again, selling out or having an exit was not our primary plan. We have had already people knocking on our door, telling (Unclear 46:44.4) love to be able to plaster their ads on our site. Just from the momentum of what we have built, they would make their money back times ten. So, with him, basically there were a lot of sliding scales and it was long and complicated. Eventually it became a long, complicated formula, but the idea was almost let's say the first ten thousand. All of the money would go towards him, and then the next fifty thousand we would start splitting, and stuff like that. So, even though I put money in, eventually, once we hit a certain benchmark, the number one priority would then be to eliminate any debt that I had to incur, any interest that we had set relative to prime and all that kind of stuff.

So, there was a lot of structure to it so there was never any question. There was no situation where a person would say, "Hey, I am not getting my

money's worth." And then you do examples. So, in three years, let's say our revenue is a thousand dollars a month versus ten thousand a month versus fifty thousand dollars a month. How will it play out? So, he had a full understanding of what his upside was, what his downside was, and what his potential was. Also, in terms of personal brand building, fitness is a lot about personal brand. We agreed that in magazines and such things, the quotes would be attributed to him. So he would be able to say that he was in Men's Health Magazine and that he was in Forbes Magazine, and all these kinds of things, whereas I would not be able to say that. I can say Examine.com was, but not that I was.

So there is also that implicit value that he has been able to build up his own brand, and so when he speaks at conferences now, it is partly because he has been in this magazine or that magazine, and stuff like that. So that (Unclear 48:23.0) too.

Michael: That makes perfect sense. So, you got the website up and running. Kurtis is putting content in. You are building the system. Google is indexing it. They are finding more content. Traffic is slowly growing. And clearly you had a financial relationship with Kurtis established such that he would get whatever revenue was coming in up to a certain point. How were you making revenue in the early days?

Sol: So, in the early days, it was basically we were linking to Amazon results for the specific supplement. So, for example, if you were looking at Vitamin D, we would link to Amazon's results for Vitamin D. We had all these tags around it that said, "We do not recommend any brands. Why are we linking to Amazon? Because we do need revenue to fund something like this." Part of the process was always once you are big enough, then you can build products. You can kind of do the consulting and whatnot, and start getting involved in academia and pharmaceuticals and all that. So, those were always the long-term plans, whereas Amazon would bring in the revenue and let us grow from that. So, that was our initial. I think if I look at every single Amazon dollar we made, I think I got two cents or one cent, and he got all the rest, which I am okay with.

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Michael: Okay, I thought you were saying Amazon was only paying you two cents. You made a decent amount of revenue from Amazon, just commissions from referral links, right?

Sol: Wait, I mean he did not have to live with his parents, for example, and whatnot, so it was driving enough revenue, but again, it was one of those stop gaps. It was never meant to be a long-term solution. We have always been about: "Hey, we are neutral. We are independent." My viewpoint is always that we have carved out our own niche that did not exist before we came around, and we have grown our niche and we have been able to do it because we have not affiliated with anybody. So, I have been very careful and particular about that. We do not take sides, so we are kind of (Unclear 50:21.3), especially in health and nutrition. It is almost like religion and politics. People take their stuff very seriously.

Michael: Well, let me ask you that then. When I go and I search for fish oils, for example, the first two results on Google are WebMD and Wikipedia. When you say that you do not really have any competition, aren't WebMD and Wikipedia your main competitors?

Sol: Yeah, I mean you could say Wikipedia is a form of competition, as is WebMD. The way we mangle ourselves though is WebMD is very consumer facing. It is very simplistic. Wikipedia is actually a lot better than most people give credit to, but again, it is very simplistic and you do not know who is contributing, especially in health and nutrition. You want to kind of know who is contributing to these websites and who is giving this information. So, you can go to the fish oil page for WebMD. You can go to the fish oil page for Wikipedia. And then you compare it to our page, where I think it has like 700 references. We squish them. That is the honest truth. We are the elephant there and we have crushed them.

Now, have we crushed them in the eyes of Google? Perhaps not. WebMD has been around since the early '90s. We have actually had - it was interesting. An MBA student actually told us how he showed our site to his professor, and his professor actually compared us to WebMD, saying that our origins are reminding him of how WebMD started. So, are we competing with them? Sure, but we do not treat them as competition. They have got their own entire

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site. Their supplement site is not their primary aspect, whereas it is for us. So we just signed a few deals to license our content into textbooks.

Michael: Oh, wow.

Sol: Yeah. So, once we are heavy into textbooks and academia and, again, corporate and pharmaceuticals and whatnot, that is our goal and that is not what WebMD does. So, that is why we do not really treat them as a competitor.

Michael: On October 8, 2012, just over a year ago, you wrote that your traffic at Examine.com was 100 thousand to 125 thousand visitors per month, and it was graduating from fun hobby to serious hobby.

Sol: That is right.

Michael: What did you mean by that - fun hobby to serious hobby?

Sol: All right. So, at that time, that is when I said it is time to put in actual effort. So, my generic day before, let's say, serious hobby time was I wake up when I wake up. I would mess around. I would read sports. I would watch TV for the first couple of hours. And then maybe I would answer some emails. Then maybe I put in some development time. And then I get distracted. I might work on it a little bit late at night. My schedule nowadays is pretty much is I am up by let's say 8:30 or nine. Walk my dog for, let's say, twenty minutes to thirty minutes. So, by 9:30 I am standing at my desk, at which point I work till roughly 11:30, maybe twelve, and it is just pure focus. We are getting all the emails out of the way. Any Facebook posts. Anything we have to do for the day, we are going to get it done.

After that, I take like an hour break. Then another hour of serious work, and then a half hour name. That is very important. Then another hour of work, and then I am done for the day. Now, that does not sound like a lot of work or a lot of effort, but how many people can claim that they get three to four hours of pure, unadulterated work in? So that is what I meant by serious hobby, where no more distractions. So, I work with three monitors and I have my IMs and my emails and all those open in separate monitors, but in the

time that I am working, I am focusing on the monitor in front of me, which can be a business development deal or which could be speaking out what are we doing next. We have hired a lot of people in the past few months. And also figure out who to hire and what are their qualifications. Testing them is very important. And it is not just say, "Hey, what is your experience?" It is more: "Okay, explain the NRF2 Pathway to us," and explain in a way that conveys they know the information, but not that it is too technical.

So, that is what I meant by graduating to a serious hobby. Right now that is a full-time job to me. It is that much focus and that much effort. And then the idea is that by the end of next year I will be able to move myself from the process again, where, again, it graduates really from serious hobby to a fun business kind of way of doing this.

Michael: I cannot even fathom having a venture that is growing as quickly as Examine.com and only spending four hours a day working on it. Like it takes me two hours just to get through my email and social media in the morning. And then, if I really lock myself, I like to do coding. I do not do a lot of it, but if I lock myself down and think about it, that is an hour that is gone like that. And then I take another look at email and I have some more customer inquiries coming in. You are selling a Supplements Guide now that I want to find out about, and I am sure you get a lot inquiries that come in, or requests for more information, or somebody sends you an email and wants to license part of your website for their textbook, or even just interviewing people. That takes like a week worth of work just to interview and get through all of the resumes and things like that. How is it manageable within only four hours a day?

Sol: It feels like you are on a deadline. You know when you were in University or in high school and you have to do a paper, you had a week, which you waited till the last day and you just focused and you got it done. That is my perspective; is that I have got four hours a day. And if I waste an hour, then it is almost like: "Holy shit, I have only now got three hours left in the day." So, I have just been able. And the other thing is balance too though. I know at twelve I am going to watch a TV show or I am going to read about sports. I know I am going to have time to read about NB and all that kind of stuff, so I have that all kind of there for me. The other thing I do is I take

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Fridays off. Fridays are my reading days. So, any article that I come across that is interesting, be it psychological, be it supplement news, or whatnot, I will put it away for Friday.

So, Friday, let's say from nine to four, all I do is read. I read sports. I read essays on this. I read essays on that. So, I know that I am going to have time to do this. I know that I am putting it off at a time when I am going to get it done, and I feel like that helps me focus. Now, in regards to emails and all that kind of stuff, I check email when I check email. And if I have a reason to check email, I will check it and I will deal with it. I am a very fast typer. I type at 140 words per minute. I feel like that helps me get rid of emails when they come. I am not a person who reads an email and deals with it later. If I read an email, I am going to answer it then. If there are unread emails in my inbox, I know that drives some people crazy. For me, that just means that that is my task list. I am going to get to it when I can.

And the other thing is I have now got a team around me, which is part of the graduating; is now they deal with it. So, if anybody contacts me about supplements, it will then be forwarded immediately to Kurtis. It will go off. Now we have an entire team actually and someone who is in charge of all that. So, it is just one of those things that eventually you find people who are tasked with dealing with this, with dealing with this, and with dealing with this. And when you mentioned licensing, that is my job. Business development, as far as I am concerned, is my job. Email, in that context, is my job. So, speaking out Version 6.0, as we are coming out with it, is important and I need a few hours, and I put it aside and I do it. But emails and business development you could say is my job. So, hopefully, by the end of next year, when that is all I am doing, that takes an hour a day maybe, and then I am good. And then I can deal with the other emails tomorrow. That is the other thing, like people forget that. If you answer an email within three days, it is not the end of the world, unless someone says it is urgent or they will mark it and title it urgent. Then you do not have to worry about answering immediately. You do not need that instant gratification.

Michael: Hey, let me ask you, because I am big in-print reader. So, if I get a magazine and I want to read something, like I will tear out the page and I will create a stack of things that I want to read, like you dedicate Fridays to. When

you are coming across things online, maybe it is a link to a nutrition article or supplements, how do you collect all those articles that you want to read so that you can go through them on your Friday off?

Sol: Oh, I just throw them in Evernote. So, Evernote is on my notebook. It is on my phone. It is on my main computer. I come across anything: copy, paste, close tab, and done. I will read the headline. If it looks interesting or if someone linked to it and said this is interesting or this is interesting, I will not even bother reading it, because once you start reading, then you are kind of skimming and then you kind of want to get it in. I am just like: "I have got my Fridays for that. It is not the end of the world." I am a big fan of habit change that you do 30 days at a time or whatever. And you will notice that most of what we do is quite inconsequential, even in terms of overall life, not even just business. So, if I read an article on Friday and I miss the opportunity to respond, so be it. And if I do need to respond, I have got enough people around me that they will harass me. I have got my inner circle that I trust and they will say, "Hey."

So, for example, this is now six months old. There was a study that showed taking fish oil increases your chance of prostate cancer. So, we got hit by like eight different people, messaging me like: "Hey, what do you think about this? What do you think about this?" So, at that time, that is when I go: "Okay, now it has gone from I am going to read this whenever to I need to now look into this and we might need to respond." We responded and it turned into 20 thousand new visitors to our site. So, stuff like that. I love using the phrase throwing weight around. I have reached a level with my business that we can throw weight around. So, for example, I am on Arnold Schwarzenegger's Advice Report. So, if someone wants a favor out of me or they say, "Hey, can you help me out with this," I can throw my weight around and I can do that. And so, now, whenever there is a supplement study that comes out or Dr. Oz or something ridiculous or whatnot, I do not even have to go seeking it out anymore. People will come to me, and it is a nice position to be in. And you thank them and the people want to help you out more. They want to let you know when stuff like this happens. So, it is a nice, mutually beneficial cycle.

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Michael: All right, I want to ask you how your business model has changed, but you just mentioned Arnold Schwarzenegger. How did you get to meet Arnold Schwarzenegger and how are you on his Advisory Panel?

Sol: I am not exactly sure. So, one of the advisors for Examine.com is one of his lead advisors for his fitness and whatnot. And we were asked to do some articles on his site for protein, for sleep, for supplementation, and stuff like that. And so, based on that, when they started asking me about supplements and they wanted to know more about this, and he did a recent deal with MusclePharm, where it is the first time he has actually endorsed a supplement company. So it was just one of those one thing led to another led to another. And the other thing is also I am a very big fan of politics. I keep abreast (Unclear 1:01:43.5) about politics, whereas most people in fitness do not care about politics. I do not want to be mean and generalize, but they tend to be slightly not very knowledgeable about what is going on. They will hear one viewpoint and then, boom, their Facebook wall is covered in that.

Michael: Sure.

Sol: So, I love reading about politics, so that also kind of made me on really good terms with his entire team and whatnot; was that I was not just: "Hey, I know fitness, I know supplements and I know nutrition." It is: "Hey, I understand what Arnold was able to do while he was in office." I understand the challenges he faced and the issues he had. And one of his famous political stories was there was a legislator who upheld one of the bills that Arnold wanted to get passed. And so, when he got one of his bills passed, Arnold vetoed it, but if you read the letter, there are two paragraphs and it basically spelled out fuck you. The first letter of each line. And that kind of stuff I knew and I laughed, and I thought it was hilarious, whereas most people in fitness would not know that, because it is one of those stupid stories that does not necessarily get a lot of press, but political junkies would know. So, that got me along really well with the team and it kind of just went from there.

Michael: Very cool. So, we talked about the business model originally being lots of great content. When you had a section on Creatine or Vitamin B or Vitamin C, or whatever, you made comments around a referral link to Amazon that said, "We are not endorsing any specific brand. Here is a link to

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Amazon if you want to buy Vitamin C," for example, and then you would make your commissions off of any sales that were made as a result of that link.

Sol: Right.

Michael: But you changed that at some point. What point did you change it and what was it changed to?

Sol: So, about six months ago, we realized that, as we evolved and as our research changed, there was a big demand for raw information. You know when I was talking about Glutamine and the muscle cell versus the actual human body. There was a lot of demand for: "Hey, what are the actual results for studies done in the human body?" So, we created something and again, worst branding name ever was Supplement-Goals Reference Guide, but the idea was that we went after personal trainers. We identified our niche.

Personal trainers and people who are very into the science of nutrition and whatnot. And we said, "Hey, we have maybe 300+ supplements coming and we have 200+ health (Unclear 1:04:21.7), which could be your blood sugar levels. It could be blood pressure. It could be anxiety. Your memory. Your bone health, and what not." And you can now look up every single study that we have analyze and we have demographic information and whatnot, and you can say, "Hey, Vitamin D; what are the health goals that are affected by Vitamin D and in what way," or, "Hey, I am concerned about my blood sugar. What supplements will actually make a difference and which are not a waste of my money," because a lot of them are a waste of your money.

And so, we also made it so you could see this supplement effect. Is it a minor effect or is it actually a notable effect? So stuff like that. So, it is this huge reference guide. I think it is like 920 pages long now. It is not something you are supposed to read. It is supposed to be something you lookup as reference. And so, we started selling that at the end of July, and so right now we are at almost 7,500 copies sold.

Michael: Wow.

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Sol: And so, that has given us the revenue base to, first of all, finally eliminate Amazon, and now we have enough funds that we have, again, hired aggressively, aggressively grown, and we have a few other products lined up for, let's say, next year, but none of them, let's say, are concrete at this time.

Michael: And how much do you sell the Supplements Guide for, Sol?

Sol: We sell it for 40 dollars.

Michael: 40 dollars. 7500 copies sold at 40 dollars. That is a lot of money.

Sol: That is a decent chunk of change, yes. But I am very proud to say that Kurtis even took very little, I basically took nothing, and all of it has gone into hiring and expanding. People that know me will say that I am very excited about Examine.com and it is not for the monetary reasons or whatever. It was what I mentioned. 600 million dollar industry. That is 500 million dollars of waste. And being able to look back, hopefully, in five to ten years and say, "We changed the supplement game. We made it for a lot better," because there are. Here is the thing. There is a lot of money being wasted on supplements, and so there is a reputation that supplements are useless. But there are a lot of supplements that are actually quite potent that actually work. So, when you talk about blood sugar, bilberry is really, really good. You talk about IBS. Peppermint oil can help with your IBS. For females that have (Unclear 1:06:43.2), Inositol can help with that.

So, there is all these supplements that work in very specific cases. Are there general health supplements? Not really. But are there at least fifty supplements that work for fifty health goals? Absolutely. And if we can look back in five to ten years and say we changed the game and now supplements are used in a targeted manner, which is what we kind of espouse, that would be awesome. And so, yeah, we made a chunk of change through our reference guide, but at the end of the day, even when you do the math, that is not a lot of money. It is not a lot of money to have an entire team conducting research and expanding this kind of stuff. And you do not just have a team conducting research. You need people who have knowledge. You need people who are well credentialed to know what they are doing.

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So, people see PhD versus Masters. A big part of that is that you learn a lot about statistics. You learn a lot about methodology. You learn about a lot of stuff that has nothing to do with the subject matter necessarily that you are studying, but it gives you this broad depth and understanding of research and how it is conducted, and what its flaws are and what its positives are. And so, you need this entire base of people from different areas too. So, when we expanded, we hired a Pharm.D, which is a Pharmacy Doctor. We hired a PhD in Biomedical. We hired a PhD in Nutrition who also has an M.P.H, which is a Masters in Public Health Administration. So, it is a very macro view on how nutrition supplementation affects people's lives. And we also have a Doctor that is working on our team too, and he specializes in Bariatrics, which is obesity.

So, you have these people with this great swath of information and you need funding. You need revenue to be able to (Unclear 1:08:22.3) it out, so it is more of a means to an end.

Michael: So, all of those people are on your staff part-time or full-time, contributing to Examine.com?

Sol: We have some that are part-time, depending on what we need, and we have some that are full-time. So, three of them you could say are full-time and three of them are part-time.

Michael: Wow. So, just in the past six months alone, you have made about 300 thousand dollars in the sale of the Supplement-Goals Reference Guide that you have plowed back into the business to hire people, to expand the staff, to bring on your Chief Technology Office so you are not doing the coding as much. And do you see sales of the Reference Guide continuing to grow, or is it at a stable level where you get the same amount of purchases per month going forward?

Sol: I would say it is stable with a bit of growth. So, when you mentioned October 2012, you said it became a serious hobby, and we had 100 to 150 thousand visitors, I think. So, we are now at 450 thousand visitors per month, so we have like 15 thousand a day. So, we have grown a bit and we are continuing to grow. And we get more mentions in magazines and all that. So,

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my viewpoint is yeah, revenue is growing in a stable. We are talking about like three percent growth per month or five percent growth, but nothing spectacular, but it is definitely leaning upwards. As V6 comes out, we hired a copy editor who is involved in (Unclear 1:09:44.3), which is one of our weaknesses. So, as we become more professional, we started developing.

So, this is kind of the process also. Now that it is going from a serious hobby to, let's say, a fun business, part of it is that you have to start instituting a lot of standard. So, we have to have a Writing Guide - a standard for writing. We have to have a design standard that the entire team knows about so they understand why what is where. So, stuff like that. So, all that requires funding. All that requires money, and so yes, that 300 grand that we were able to generate goes right back into that, but then there are so many more cause and effects that eventually would generate more revenue and all that kind of stuff. So, we are firmly in the black, but again, it is more towards a future goal than saying, "Hey, we are in the black. We are making money now. Congratulations."

Michael: Yeah. Are you taking any money out of Examine.com right now, Sol?

Sol: I think maybe I took a thousand out last month, but not really. Again, to me, as long as I am not having to sink more money into it, I am glad, and so, again, that money we made went into what I am calling a kitty. So, it is there, so as we expand or some opportunity arises, or whatnot, or I have to travel somewhere - let's say to Europe or Kurtis, or other guys, have to -, we have that base of money sitting there. So, no, I have not really taken out.

Michael: The Supplement-Goals Reference Guide - this 900-page PDF that you created. Does most of the information in that PDF come from the website? How much of it is new that is not contained on the website?

Sol: It is extracted from the databases of the website. So, is it accessible? Sure. So, the health goals and all that is not on the website. It is equivalent to, let's say, it will take you ten second with the PDF what will take you twenty minutes on the website. So, is it possible? Yes, but you have to kind of piece it together yourself.

Michael: Got you. So the health goals are not on the website in a way that is reference like the PDF, but you could find it if you were looking.

Sol: Yeah, you kind of have to (Unclear 1:11:52.0). It is not like we are trying to make it obnoxious. It is just we have not built that into it. So, if you want to find information, you kind of have to reverse engineer. You have to search for old pages that talk about a specific health goal, see what we have to say, and then kind of ascertain through that.

Michael: Got you. So, basically, you took the content, you made it more user friendly, you put it in an entire document that people can access via their tablet while they are at the gym or in a nutrition consultation or something, and you are selling it for 40 dollars a piece, and you are selling hundreds, if not over a thousand copies per month. Is the price point correct at 40? Do you think you are underselling it because you want to get more sales? Is it high for people that you are targeting - the nutritionists?

Sol: I do not think it is high at all. It likely is on the lower end. I have been around in the fitness business now for long enough that I know that we are definitely a lot cheaper than most people are selling, especially for the amount of effort and research we put into it. So there is two sides to it. One is that yeah, it is targeted to a very technical audience, so it is kind of middling logic, where it is low priced, but we specifically did low because we are targeting a specific audience. We are targeting trainers, we are targeting nutritionists, and you can go on Twitter and you can search, and every day some nutritionist or trainer is saying this is an amazing guide and amazing reference, which is also very humbling, but there is a target audience.

So, eventually, yeah, we likely will come out with a more consumer friendly version. It will likely be a binded book. It will likely be rewritten from scratch and it likely will be more expensive, likely 50 or 60, maybe even higher. But again, that is one of those not set in stones. The reason we also went with 40 is that, in terms of business, you definitely do not want to put your price too low. Everything has expectations. And so, when we say, "Hey, we have got three PhDs and two medical doctors and all this behind this," and then we are selling it at twenty dollars a piece, we might be able to

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generate more revenue in the short-term, but eventually, when we want to sell more stuff, we want to sell more higher end stuff. We have kind of dragged our price lower than it should be. A little bit of testing. 39, let's say, was more than nice spot for us, so we are far enough from 50 that people can impulsively buy, but it is a high enough price that we are not shooting ourselves in the foot for the future.

Michael: Got you. When I go to Examine.com and I look, your Reference Guide is smack-dab on every single page. You are promoting it, and then you have got all the content on there. And when you click on that link, it takes you to a sales page for the Reference Guide. It is a long form sales page, classic long form. It goes down. It has got phenomenal PhDs, doctors, and brands that are recommending it. It goes on and on and on.

Sol: Absolutely.

Michael: You are a long form fan.

Sol: I am a pragmatic man and I am, again, driven by numbers. Long form outsold short form, and at the end of the day, again, it is a means to an end of revenue to getting more people. So, do I like long form sales myself? Not really. Did I get a few complains? Absolutely. But in the long-term business manner, not really.

Michael: So, you created a long form and a short form, you tested them against each other, and the long form sold more?

Sol: Absolutely. We have tested. We have tested out the language on the buttons. We have tested out where we put the buttons. We have even tested out colors. All that kind of stuff. Absolutely. So, long form did win.

Michael: All right. And when I go to click the buy button, it takes me to a page and I can either pay by PayPal or pay by credit card. When I click credit card, this cool little pop-up comes under the screen. What processor are you using for taking credit card information?

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Sol: We are using Stripe, and they are absolutely brilliant. They have made taking credit cards so much easier. I put them at the level of companies like Twilio, who have made VoIP so much easier. SMSing and text messaging, and phone calls, and all that. Their thing is simple stupid. Like it literally took me maybe an hours' worth of effort to get it working. It is super easy, so yeah, we use Stripe. They of course let you do a lot more and, again, V6 we are going to implement a lot more stuff, like subscription stuff and whatnot. But we use the most simplistic version. It does not even ask for your address and whatnot. And that is part of it though; is that conversation rate matters. The RP revenue per user is let's say your master, and so yeah, we tested it out and that is why we use specifically the PayPal icon instead of pay with PayPal button. That is why we have those PayPal images on the bottom and all that.

Michael: So, when somebody makes a purchase on Stripe or by PayPal, it routes them back to your website with some sort of confirmation - the payment has been received. Do you allow people to just download it right there? Do you email them the PDF? How does that work?

Sol: So, one thing we did in order to improve conversions, which did increase customer service a little bit, is that you can pay with never having created an account. So, once we have your money, then we can deal with your account and all that kind of stuff. That is easy. So, you go, you pay, and then it says, "Hey, to download it, you need to create an account." So, do you want to log into an existing account or do you want to register a new one? And once they do, basically yeah, they can download it whenever they want. We did not DRM it. I did not put any effort into that. Honestly it is one of those things where you may save two cents per dollar here, but then there is the inconvenience. Then you have to watermark everything and it adds so much overhead and effort, especially for a 40-dollar product. Are we going to sue people? Like that is not what we would do. So, it was just a straight-up PDF.

One of the things that we do to protect ourselves indirectly is it is updated every day. Even if it goes on Torrent, it becomes outdated the next day. Because we are conducting research, we are adding new research every day, and it is a lifetime access payment. The value of it also that you get these

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huge lists of updates that are going to happen. So, if you want to Torrent, go ahead, but you will be outdated within a day.

Michael: Do you automatically build a PDF on cue every night?

Sol: Absolutely. We have processes that generate the PDF file.

Michael: Wow. Does it put the date at the bottom, so if somebody Torrents it, it says January 16, 2011?

Sol: That was one of the ones where we had internal discussions and we said, "If you put the date, there is a value in it in terms of getting it updated and all that," but instead we just wanted to leave it blank. We just wanted to leave it empty, where if someone is Torrenting, the other thing too is that you have to make sure the files match. So, if the dates are not on stuff like that, they can even screw it up, and people do screw up Torrent. We have actually found a few screwed up ones. So, no effort in terms of fixing that up.

Michael: What is your refund rate for your 30-day 100% satisfaction guarantee?

Sol: I think it is like 1.1%.

Michael: One percent. So, for every thousand orders, you get ten.

Sol: Yeah, it is pretty low. Again, I think part of the value is, because it is updated every day, even if you get the refund, you get outdated. So there is that value that okay, I am sinking in 40 bucks with these guys, but they have been around for almost three years. Everyone says nice things about them, so we feel comfortable with that.

Michael: Yeah, very cool. And so, I know a lot of people are really concerned about putting information into a PDF and then selling it, because then so and so health trainer is going to share it with the five other people that work at their gym. How do you get over the fact that people are going to copy it, or what makes you feel like people are going to be truthful and honest in purchasing the product and only using it for their personal use?

Sol: Honestly, again, it is pragmatism. We cannot really control what they do. I mean we can add locks and all these other headaches, but at the end of the day, if they want to share, then they share it. From our perspective, again, I mentioned this before, but the lifetime updates is nice because you would have to continually re-share it. The other side is our brand, going back to the domain and all that, so now our fans are called Examination. It is a (Unclear 1:20:20.9) and all that. Our fans are big fans of what we do. We get a lot of traffic. We get a lot of new people who have never heard of us before, who will then come across our site and see all the information we have and all that. So, at the end of the day, you cannot get away from marketing. You cannot get away from acquiring new customers. And we are getting enough. We are getting so many that, again, worrying and stressing out about someone sharing this document, it is going to happen.

I mean I have been involved in fitness launches that have generated half a million dollars in their first one week. And again, I mean these guys are even less sophisticated in a lot of ways than us. Like they just have a ZIP file that is publicly accessible. You can literally right-click and share that ZIP file with everybody you want, whereas in ours, at least you have to be logged in and it streams the PDF through our site so there is no endpoint for you to send it to anybody else and download it. But again, they are still making half a million on one week. They are still making a million dollars a year. And if you are stressing out about one guy sharing with five people, then you need to kind of think bigger is what I would say. Even if you lose five percent, if you are making a million dollars and you lose five percent, that sucks, but otherwise you are making a thousand dollars and you are not losing your five percent; who cares? So, you have got to be pragmatic.

Michael: Yeah, makes perfect sense. 40 dollars seems like a no-brainer. If you are in the health space, here is a document that is going to help you do your job, be more intelligent, and help your customers. Why not make it a yearly recurring fee? So people can try it for a year. If they do not like it, they cancel. If they like it, they continue to pay for updates.

Sol: Yeah, that is one thing we considered, but again, this is almost an example of prototyping also. We want to get it out, we want to get some

revenue, and we want to be able to move away from Amazon. So, one of our next planned things is going to be a high-end round-table discussion, where we will spend a couple hundred dollars per panelist to bring in a doctor of this, an expert of this, and then have them talk about the discussion. It will be like 30 or 40 bucks per month, which is not a cheap amount for basically 60 to 90 minutes of audio, plus a Guide and all that. But this again was to get our foot in the door; was to say, "Hey, we are the man about supplements." So, since we have launched this, we have grown a lot. We have generated a lot of revenue. Could we have made more? Absolutely. But am I disappointed with where we are not? No, again it is that pragmatism, where people get so stuck with this idealism. You could have made a million dollars and you only made three hundred. Like: "Ugh, shucks," right?

But in five years, what is the effect of what I have done? I have got seven thousand plus people who have paid me 40 dollars, who are now using our Reference Guide. You can find us on Twitter and Facebook all the time. If you use any of those tracking sites, we will get at least a dozen mentions every day; about someone saying we like Examine and how the Guide is amazing. So, yeah, maybe we made a little less money directly, but indirectly, our word of mouth is stronger than ever. When you have the Editors in Chief of Muscle and Fitness and Men's Health, and all the other magazines, saying, "Examine.com is awesome," you just wonder how did you get there.

I mean one of my favorite examples actually is I went to a Toronto seminar. I met up with this guy who lived in Edmonton. We did a guest post for him on fish oil because, again, I met him. This guy retweeted that link from him. I started talking to him. He eventually became our advisor, and because of him is why I am on Arnold Schwarzenegger's Advisory Board. And it is a direct sequence. So, what are the chances that I would have met that guy from Edmonton if I had not gone to that event? What are the chances that guy would have retweeted that link because he had never heard of us before? And he was a former Editor of Men's Health, and so we have been mentioned in Men's Fitness and Men's Health. So, there are all these indirect consequences of people putting their own word of mouth and reputation on the line. They are not just saying, "Hey, look at this." They say, "This is awesome," or, "I love this," or, "This is fantastic."

So, building that brand, we have 16 to 17 thousand Facebook likes, which is not that much, but it is something. It is a lot more than most people in fitness. So, again, more of a long-term pragmatic view instead of how much money can I make today and tomorrow.

Michael: Got you. And are people recommending and overtly suggesting that other people check out Examine.com to buy the Reference Guide, or just because the online resources are so thorough and useful?

Sol: Well, honestly both. I mean yeah, the majority of it is: "Hey, check out Examine.com." So, fitness especially is very individual-based. There is very few brands per se. Let's use Nick Mitchell. He has got 50 thousand Twitter followers. He is a big name in fitness. And you have Olly Foster. You have 50, 100, 200 different people who have all got ten thousand plus followers on Twitter, and people are invested in their specific brand (Unclear 1:25:28.1). So, they will tweet and them and say, "Hey, what about Creatine," and their response will not be this is what I think and this is what I think. They will say, "Go to Examine.com." So, yeah, we have reached that level where everyone and anyone mentions us or recommends us. And yeah, there are people who will buy our Guide, who will say, "Hey, this Guide is amazing," or, "Hey, this is the best." It is not uncommon for me to see, on Twitter, someone saying, "Best 40 dollars spend on a nutritional guide. Saved 100 dollars on something just because of this thing." And then, yeah, again, I love tracking, so you can track someone clicked on it and bought it. Even though Twitter is like the worst way to sell anything, but yeah, people will still convert that way.

Michael: All right, we are coming up on an hour and a half, Sol. This has been a phenomenal interview. I have got a bunch of other questions. I am going to boil it down to two. I want to ask you about your Advisory Panel and I want to ask you about social media and newsletters. Let me end with the Advisory Panel and I will ask you about social media. So, clearly you have got a website up. You are generating a lot of traffic via Google. I can see on Alexa.com, it sends you a ton of traffic, even though when you build businesses, you do not want to build them for Google traffic because Google can change their algorithm and make you fall off a cliff. You are on Reddit.

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You are on Facebook. A lot of third party websites, like BodyBuilding.com, will link to your content because it is so good.

How do you encourage? What is your social process? What is your marketing process to get more people talking about it? Do you have a newsletter that goes out regularly? Do you rely completely on Facebook and Twitter? Is Reddit your key?

Sol: Advisory Board. That sounds like a social media question.

Michael: I am going to end with Advisory.

Sol: Okay, all right.

Michael: Yeah. So let's talk about how you get more people to the website other than search engine optimization.

Sol: Right. So, Google is actually like 50% of our traffic, which is not that much considering most big sites generate a lot of traffic off Google. From our context, and actually this kind of goes back to the Advisory Board, I am not a shy person and you always hear from haters basically. It is kind of the same, but you do not ever hear from the other side. And so, I always made it my mission, even before I ever started Examine, it was an idea in my head; was: "Hey, I read this article and I found it very interesting," so I sent them an email and I would say, "Hey, you have been on the Internet for a long time, so I know you always hear from haters. I just wanted to say I really liked your post on thoracic mobility or whatnot." And they would file it away in their head or say thanks, and that was the end of that.

So that was one way I got to know people indirectly and directly, and it was very honest. I mean I never went looking for a fight and I would only send an email if I thought what you wrote was very interesting. The other thing was we have always shared things. I have been a very long time Reddit user. I have been on it for seven plus years. I am dog-ears with Reddit and whatnot. So, any time I would come across interesting articles, I would also submit them to Reddit, or I would post them on my Facebook, or on our Facebook page, or share it on Twitter. I come from the tech industry, and the tech

industry tends to be very happy to share, very happy to tweet, very happy to Facebook, and all that kind of stuff. And I kind of brought that mindset over to fitness, whereas in fitness, there is always (Unclear 1:28:52.2), or even in most businesses. There is (Unclear 1:28:54.6) very controlling or they will send a tweet out and they will email you as if they are doing you a huge favor, saying, "Hey, I tweeted a link to you." It is like: "Thank you, what do you want me to say?"

Is just like as if they are owing you favors or you owe them now. So, I was always like I find this interesting; this is why I am linking to it. I am not endorsing it. I am not saying it is the right thing or the wrong thing. I thought this was interesting in my head, or it made me think. So, that was always a process I had, or we still have. And again, now we have just reached the level where we can throw weight around. Whenever there is a study, people come asking us. So, every time we post on Facebook, inevitably, we get five or ten shares. We generate 500 to a couple thousand clicks without any effort now, so I feel like that is how we got there in the first place. And the last thing is we were unique. There is no one else like us. The content you will find on fish oil you will not find anywhere else. You will not find research on Vitamin D amalgamated and collated. That Purple Cow thing that Seth Godin says and all that - it is easy to say, but it is hard to do. And in this case, we are purple cow.

We get the nicest fan mails all the time. And fan mail makes it sound so important, but we get the nicest emails and messages from people, saying, "Hey, I ran into your website. I am a doctor. I am studying nutrition and I love what you guys are doing, and I just wanted to say keep up the good work." So, we have established ourselves enough and we have built up something enough over time that information is so good and so different and so useful that people like sharing what we are doing. And that is what I was saying. Again, on Facebook and Twitter, it is not me hunting people down. It is not me searching for the keyword Creatine and answering everybody. It is just people like what we do and they are happy to spread the word, and we make their lives easier.

Michael: Right. And you have no newsletter.

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Sol: So, we do have a newsletter, but it is completely hidden and it is one of the biggest undeveloped things we have done, I will admit. We still have like ten or twelve thousand emails, but you have to dig for it to find it.

Michael: I could not find it.

Sol: Exactly. So it is a little bit hidden and you are like: "Whoa, there is a newsletter here," and we get maybe like ten to fifteen emails a day. And every time there is a spike of 50 or 100. So, I send out a newsletter once every six to eight weeks. I am actually terrible. I mean - and I say this in a very bad way - I should be doing a better job. The idea is I now have people who will do better jobs once the process is in place and all that. But yeah, newsletter is by far. We did a sale recently, like two to three weeks ago. Actually, we were like: "Hey, we have hired all these people. Here is a quick 60-hour sale," and so I tried every single form of social media. And email was definitely by far the best conversion and all that kind of stuff, but Facebook was very underrated. It actually did really well. It did not convert as good as email. But because there is so much Facebook traffic from our fan page and all that, that was not a very profitable source of revenue. Twitter was an absolute disaster. Absolute disaster. What a waste of time.

Michael: Wow. Did you buy premium placement on Facebook and Twitter so you exposed it more, or did you just post on your feed?

Sol: No, on Twitter, we did not. This was right before they opened it up to everyone. Because we are a Canadian business, it was not available to us. On Facebook, we did a few sponsor posts, but we did not do anything heavy. Maybe one or two hundred dollars, which, again, since we have 16 thousand fans, that is not much for exposure. But no, just even the likes, the shares, people liking what we did, and liking what we do. People were excited that, hey, they have got more people researching. We made a connection that we started selling this 100 days ago. We have spent that money to grow the website to make it better for you. We are not drinking our Mai Tais on the beach or whatever. We have spent the money back into making this stuff even better, and people really responded to that in a very positive manner.

Michael: What was the 60-hour sale, Sol? What did you sell it for?

Sol: Oh, we just knocked ten dollars off.

Michael: Cool. All right, let me finish it up with the Advisory Board, Sol. So, you mentioned a couple times that you have an Advisory Board that opened up other opportunities for you to be on Arnold Schwarzenegger's Advisory Panel. I did not remember seeing any of that on the website, so my question is: who is on the Advisory Panel, how many people, and how are they compensated for their time, and what are those responsibilities that they contribute?

Sol: Right. So, our Advisory Board is listed on our About Page. So, our About Page is basically what do we do, who our Editors are, our entire team, and then who is on our Advisory Boards. Our Advisory Board was basically a collection of people that I was talking and asking for help anyway. Like I said, I was not shy, and so I would email XYZ. I love meeting people. Everyone has got really interesting stories once you get a chance to like dig into it and all that. So, these are people that I was talking to anyway. And when, again, we started becoming, let's say, a more serious hobby kind of situation, it was important to have people that I could publicly say are people that we look up to and people that we ask questions.

We do not compensate them at all. Their only compensation per se is that they are mentioned on Examine.com. And it awesome, again, that we are at such a level that once a week I get some MD or some PhD emailing me, saying, "Hey, I would love to be on your Advisory Board." Again, it kind of goes back into - I mean it very cliché. Build value. Build value. Purple Cow. That kind of stuff. But we have built up something really interesting, we have built up something really awesome, and I think five of the advisors are on no other sites and no other advisory boards. They were on it because, one, they trusted who I am. They trusted what I am building, they trust Kurtis's research, and they love what we are doing. So that is kind of where they came from.

I have not actually used them much in terms of business development. I have used them more as a sounding board. At any given time, I can email them and say, "Hey, I have a question. What do you think about this?" So, for example,

Bryan Chung. He is a PhD and an MD, and he is a peer-reviewer and journalist, so he knows about science. When we talk about being pedantic, and I say this in the most heartfelt way, we put a word wrong, he will come after us and we will fix it. Peter Woolf, same thing. He is PhD MIT and PhD Harvard. Very well qualified people who know their research. On the other hand, we have someone like Lou Schuler, who is a former Editor in Men's Health, who is a writer who writes book. So, I ask him a lot about how do we make ourselves more friendly. There are times that I ask open-ended questions, but most of the time it is very specific questions.

I go: "Hey, what grade level should we attempt for, for our summaries versus our (Unclear 1:35:56.6) summary?" That is a very specific question he can answer that is of his skill set, and then he can say, "Hey, this and this." It is basically having a free consultant whenever you need them. Now, I do not abuse them, because that is not what is the relationship is about, and it is a relationship. They will ask me for some information. A lot of people in the fitness industry know that I am more technically competent than almost anyone else in fitness. I have an appreciation of, let's say, content distribution networks and DNS and hosting, and all that kind of stuff that most people do not. So, any time they have a question, it is a two-way street. So, I also give them value, where any time they have a supplement question, Kurtis will knock it out of the park for them. He will put in the extra effort for them. And any time they have any technical or anything I can help with, or anyone I know or anything like that, they can ask me and I will help them.

So, it is definitely a two-way street, so the latest, again, is the V6. We had like five or six specific questions. I sent them around to people, so I sent them to my Advisory Board. And again, they all come from different audiences, which I think is really important. So, we have the researcher. We have the administrators. We have the writers. All these different people have different skill sets. So, when they responded, I had this nice mosaic of what should we do for our next version when we go into a legitimate kind of situation.

Michael: Makes sense. All right, Sol, this is the part of the show where I ask the audience to take 30 seconds and reach out to your and say thank you. Do not be just a hater. Take a moment to say thank you to you, because you came on here and you gave us an hour and a half. It was a phenomenal

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discussion, walking us through not only your history and how you were able to come up with the idea and build Examine.com, but how you made it a reality by bringing on Kurtis, by developing the software, by working incrementally, but adding to it over time. So, I urge the audience: click on the link under the video. Say thank you to Sol on Twitter. There is a link on the left-hand side of the screen and just underneath the video. They are on Twitter at ExamineCom. They are also on Facebook at ExamineCom. So, if someone is shy, but they want to send you a thank you email, is there an email address that they can send you an email directly to?

Sol: So, this is one of my ways. I do not put my email publicly. I always put it through system process, but if you go to Examine.com and you go to the Contact Page and you fill it out, I will see it.

Michael: All right, sounds great. You can do that, but I urge everybody who is watching to do something. The first step in creating a relationship is to start a conversation. This is giving you an excuse to do that. Sol has mentioned that he does that. Whenever he reads something that is useful, he will send an email to the author, and I think it is that easy to start that conversation.

Sol: Oh, so easy. When you are looking for something, it is so easy just saying, "Hi, I thought what you wrote was interesting." Done.

Michael: Done. Yeah.

Sol Orwell, Director of Enthropia.com and Publisher of Examine.com. Thank you for coming on the Domain Sherpa Show, sharing your expertise with domain names and development, and thanks for being a Domain Sherpa.

Sol: Oh, it was absolutely my pleasure.

Michael: Thank you all for watching. We'll see you next time.

Watch the full video at:

<http://www.domainsherpa.com/sol-orwell-examine-interview/>