

How I Went from \$50,000 to More Than \$250,000 in Sales Per Year - With Shane Wells

Watch the full video at:

<http://www.domainsherpa.com/shane-wells-countywebsite-interview/>

Three messages before today's interview educates and motivates you.

First, if you're a domain name investor, don't you have unique legal needs that require domain name technical know-how and industry experience? That's why you need David Weslow of Wiley Rein. Go search for David Weslow on DomainSherpa, watch his interview and you can see for yourself that he can clearly explain issues, can help you with buy/sell agreements, deal with website content issues and UDRP actions, and even help you write your website terms and conditions. David Weslow is the lawyer to call for Internet legal issues. See for yourself at NewMediaIP.com.

Second, managing multiple domain name marketplace and auction site accounts is a pain. Inevitably, you forget to sign into one and lose a great domain...or worse. Now imagine using a single, simple-to-use and comprehensive control panel to manage all your accounts. That's Protrada. You can setup search filters, analyze domains, automate bidding, list domains for sale, and buy domains across all major marketplaces. Protrada also has a new semantic engine that builds Google-friendly websites with rich content and network feeds. Sign up at Protrada.com to get 20 free credits and start building and monetizing your domains today.

Finally, if you have questions about domain names, where should you go to ask them? The answer is DNForum.com. Not only is DN Forum the largest domain name forum in the world, but it's the best. You can learn about domain names and the industry, buy and sell domain names, talk about domain name news, and meet other domainers just like yourself. Register for a free DN Forum account and begin advancing your skills and knowledge today. And when you do signup, send me a friend request so we can connect.

Here's your program.

Michael Cyger: Hey, everyone. My name is Michael Cyger and I'm the publisher of domainsherpa.com, the website where you learn how to become a more successful domain name entrepreneur directly from the experts. For anyone that doesn't know me, I really dislike sales. You'd never guess, given the fact that I've run a few publishing companies in my career and I've made most of my revenue from advertising. So I'm always looking to learn from expert sales people. I want to learn what they do, what makes them successful, and I want to bring it back to you.

And to help us do that, I invited Shane Wells to join us. Shane is a sales manager at countywebsite.com. An internet marketing company servicing small businesses in Maryland and Virginia since 1996.

I had dinner with Shane and countywebsite.com owner Bob Luther at the Geo Publishers Event in 2011 and we had a great time. Shane volunteered to come on here and tell us about his experiences and share his sales tactics.

Shane, thanks for coming on the show.

Shane Wells: Hey, thanks for having me. It was great to see you again.

Michael: Shane, I described countywebsite.com. Do you describe it any other way to customers?

Shane: Well, it's interesting. I describe it to prospects as I walk in their door and they go, "I've never heard of that. You're not the Yellow Pages, right? Who are you?" And I say, "I'm here to bring customers to your business. That's what I do." It's interesting, because there's so many things that we do that took us a long time. That's the slogan of our company. "Bringing new customers to your business." Because it was too hard to explain that we do SEO, we do this, we do that. We're dragging small businesses into the internet age. They didn't get it, so they wanted to get to the chase.

"What do you do?"

"We bring in new customers. Are you interested? We're in business! Do you want them or not?" kind of thing.

Michael: Great slogan. I still love it. And so, who are your customers? When you walk in the front door, who are you walking in the front door of?

Shane: Great question. It's—our customers are almost anybody and that's kind of the method that we use. Small businesses. Let me rephrase that. Small business—and I guess people have different definitions of small business. I think the government has one definition and I disagree with that one, but hyper-local. We were doing hyper-local small business marketing before that term was even imagined. So it's walking up and down a strip mall, walking into a restaurant, a hair salon, a dentist, everybody is a prospect. Going into an industrial park and talking to a plumber, a car repair guy. There's unlimited potential for these small business clients.

Who I don't want to walk into is probably easier to describe. Wal-Mart, Best Buy, the big box stores. Those are the ones I would pass by. Everything else, if it's got a door, we should walk in it—even if we don't know what it is. I've walked in doors before and got a, “I'm not sure what you do here. What do you do here?” And then they explain, and I say, “Well, I think I can help you somehow.”

Michael: All right, I told the audience your title at the beginning of the show: sales manager. Does this mean that you manage a team of sales people, that you don't actually there and sell anything yourself?

Shane: Well that kind of gets into the history of me with the company, I guess. I started with Bob Luther back in 1999. Believe it or not, answered an ad in the newspaper back when that was the way to hire people, I guess. And came on board as a sales rep in a territory in an area. There was lots of challenges in those days. As a matter of fact, we were selling in those days, ads, what we'd've called pages in the network. We weren't even selling websites. It was interesting because all of our ads on our network, we had geo names—were performing better than people's websites if they had websites, because their websites were terrible.

So it's kind of grown and I've never stopped selling since that day. My experience led me to mentor these other people as we brought more on board,

very very small. At the beginning we were still not a large company. We have 12 outside sales reps, so it's not a huge number to manage. We've kept small, we've kept focused. So I manage them for their bigger deals, their structured off the wall packages, but day to day operations, they're fine on their own.

And then this is just my experience with Bob and the company has led me to do a host of other things, sidetracked from countywebsite like domain transfers. If anyone has a domain transfer, I handle it. I've probably transferred into our company hundreds of domains from every registrar that's out there. So I've had a great experience with that. But the sale is what I love and if I could go without and coldcall tomorrow and go knock on some doors, I'd thoroughly enjoy it. I just don't do it nearly as much as I used to because of the other stuff—managing my own customer base.

Michael: I'm going to come back and ask you about the cold calling and I want to ask you about pounding the pavement and walking into businesses, and I'm going to ask you, if you as a sales person or your other sales person actually have to manage things like transferring in the domains yourself or if you have a team. But before we get to all of that, Shane, you said that you started doing this in 1999. You've been working with Bob Luther at countywebsite.com doing sales for about 13 years now. Give us an idea of where you started. First year, you were selling, you had a territory, do you remember what your annual sales were that year?

Shane: No, but they were the worst they've ever been, only because—and I would tell this to a new sales rep starting with us today. If they're not—if I'm not giving them some renewals some existing clients that I'm giving them—then they're starting off in a new area. In a new geographic, for instance. Year one's tough. You're out there getting new businesses, day after day, month after month, building your base, because our program we still is basically on a yearly package. That gets more into the sales end of it, how we do that.

But it's a yearly package. So they will—year one, looking back, my goal was to sell 4 packages a week. Packages were much less money, the packages back then maybe were selling for a few hundred bucks; \$400, \$500 a year.

So my goal was to sell four a week of those. So I guess if you do the math, that's—my sales might have been—again, that's a goal, but—maybe \$50,000? I don't know. Something—50, 60--somewhere in that range that first year.

Michael: And so after 15 years of doing this, you've got customers that come back to you every year that renew with you, that are bringing in new customers. What were your sales last year, do you remember?

Shane: They were upwards of over a quarter million dollars last year and actually have been for the last few years over that quarter million mark. And interesting but nice, it's been a steady—if you were to look at a chart of my sales, it's up every year, year after year substantially nice growth jump.

Michael: Excellent. So that's what we're going to figure out today. That's what the audience is going to better understand by the end of this show. How do you, Shane, generate over a quarter of a million dollars per year in sales revenue and what can we take away and begin doing on our own websites?

So let me start with this question. I know you mentioned you sell—you used to just sell banner ads that—an ad on the network, for example. Now you offer a host of products and services at countywebsite.com. What kinds of things do you sell now?

Shane: We still that same original package as well, so the original package—I guess in just a quick history of our network, we have geo domains like originally we had—when I joined Bob Luther, we had some county names, arlingtoncounty.com, but then we had some other ones like howardcountyguide.com. It was a mish mash. Maybe a city thrown in there. leesburg.com. No consistency. So we were brainstorming in 2000 and came up with, “What's a consistent name that we can come up with?” That's when we came up with the county website name in 2000.

Then we quickly grabbed carrollcountywebsite.com, baltimorecountywebsite.com, howardscounty—so that I live on the edge of 3 counties. So if I'm soliciting in Carroll county, I can announce it on carrollcountywebsite.com. Howards County is howardscountywebsite.com. Reinforces my brand, keeps things similar. So what we've sold was an ad

page with some rich text, a couple pictures, it wasn't just like a banner ad like you make up today. But it was just some basics because even back then, we were into SEO. “We need to have some text on this page for this page to get found and build value to our network.”

So the funny story is there was one time in that early period where we said, “These pages are better than websites and a lot of these people that we're doing these pages for don't have websites. What are we doing here?” Now remember, this is all in the early days, so we're like, “Wait a minute. Let's just go grab these guys' domains and point the domains to their pages that we already do for them.” So there was a week there when we went out and just started grabbing names for customers. Maggiesrestaurant.com or all these things, because they didn't even care at that point. They didn't know the value of—they trusted me as a salesperson to come in and say, “I can get you customers, don't worry how I'm going to do it, but you'll enjoy the benefit of what I do.” Whether they have a domain, not have a domain, it's a different story today, which was your question.

Today we have basically two types of prospects when we walk in the door or coldcall. And we ask them right away, “Do you have a website, or do you not have a website?” It's going to be—it has to be one of those two. Again, we're trying to stay focused here. The ultimate package that we try to sell them initially is the same for both clients. It's going to be some sort of page on the internet that we have control over to do SEO work and all those great things and get them some business from the internet.

Michael: So the first question you ask then is, “Do you have a website or not?” if they say they don't, then you'll create a microsite on your countywebsite page?

Shane: If they don't, kind of the trick thing is when I ask them that question whether they say yes or now, I say, “Great. That's fantastic.” and it throws them off. Think of how many times—first of all, these small business owners . . . you asked me, but I'm getting sidetracked again. You asked me who's my prospect and I said, “small business owners.” There's a funny commercial, and if you haven't seen it, you should just YouTube it, I guess. It's a Staples commercial called, “Meet Dave.” And this guy Dave walks into a business

and he starts saying hello. “Hi, Dave. Hi, Dave.” It's all him. He's doing different jobs inside the business. And then they close with, “It's just Dave there.”

That's my client. He's too busy to do anything so, “Do you have a website or not?” He thinks I'm trying to sell him a website at that point. I have a website. And I say, “Great!” And he's like, “Wait a minute.” I just threw him completely off his game. He thought I was going to turn around and walk out the door. Because anybody selling websites would turn around at that point. So that's my opening question and it's an icebreaker with these guys.

Michael: So I should back up and actually ask you a little bit more about countywebsite.com. So the products that you sell, you start with website, you start by asking them if they need more business, which of course, every small business owner is going to say “yes.” So right off the bat, you're getting them to say yes to something. And then you ask them, “Do you have a website or not?” and they tell you one answer. It doesn't matter what they say, you say, “Fantastic!” and it throws them off and then you—then what do you start doing from there? What's your next process step in order to decide what products and services you offer best match what their need is?

Shane: Then it gets tricky. You've got to start asking questions. You've got to start feeling them out a little bit. Look around their store or their business. You've got to just find out their hot buttons just by going back to basic sales. What are their hot buttons? Are they—and there's a couple different categories of hot buttons in the network. If I go into a restaurant and say, “Maggie's Restaurant is on my network,” that may be the hot button. “Oh, if he's doing it, then I have to do it!”

So that's kind of a network effect. Or, “I want a pretty, flashy looking website.” So that's the—I don't know what you would call that—the vanity effect. They're not even interested in the traffic necessarily. They just want the flash. Then you've got the people who—and this is more common nowadays—where they say, “I just want to get found on Google. I don't care what you do.” Again, that's becoming more common to hear that, but it's great for me. The more, if you think about it, going back to the day when we

started this, you would think, “Oh, wow, there wasn't all this competition.” Yes, there was and even if there wasn't, it was a whole different mindset with the business owners. It was like dragging them into this total education.

Not much has changed except that they've been beat on by 10 years by internet companies to do advertising. So now they have to make these choices. Who do I go with?

Michael: Do you find one of the hot buttons to be social? They want to do something social, a twitter, a Facebook, something because people ask them if they're on Facebook or not, but they don't know anything about it?

Shane: Yes. We're seeing more of that. That's a great point. Facebook, social media, even videos, video marketing, that type of thing. And mobile, which is a whole other category. And again, it's almost like somebody would say, “Does all this competition bother you?” Now you're not just competing with the credit card machine guy and the phone, and all these other sales people, all these other internet sales people. And I say, “Well, there's enough business out there for everybody, so I'm not that concerned about it.”

But the Facebook and the social media thing, people are excited about and that's great. Kind of one other neat thing about it is they'll get excited and they'll be like, “I've got to do this! I've got to sign up for this!” and I'm like, “Great!” and I consult them a little, steer them in the right direction, but my goal again is getting back to the basics because these people can get excited about video marketing, they can hear that if they're not on YouTube, doing video marketing, their business might as well close. Or something like that. They hear that.

And I'm not going to deny them. There's value to lots of different avenues of marketing, but let's take a look at your website. How do you come up in Google? Let's go back to the basics first. So we're excited about all those new avenues also. We're really excited about that. But we won't let them miss the basics.

Michael: Your business owns a bunch of domain names. You own all of the major county websites. I looked in my local area. I live in Kitsap county

Washington right outside Seattle on the Olympic peninsula—or just outside the Olympic peninsula and you own Kitsapcounty.com. I think you own kingcounty.com. You own—a lot of the county domain names across the U.S., right?

Shane: Not what's called the “pure county” domains. Those are hard to get. We get them whenever we can. They're not—again, backing up one second, to be honest with you, the name doesn't matter. It's the marketing of the name that matters and that's a theme that I carried all the way down to the local level of the business owner.

Michael: So tell me why that makes sense? Why does the name not matter?

Shane: The name does matter for that group of geodomainers that have the big ones. the Palm Springs, the Baltimore—those I 100% agree that that's a different sales tactic. But if I'm talking about the name of me—I live in Carroll county, so I have to market carrollcountywebsite.com. I've been doing that for 12 years now, and I could poll most businesses and residents, and they've never heard of carrollcountywebsite.com. But my search statistics show that thousands of unique visitors hit that every month searching for everything related to the community. So I know people are hitting it, and they probably hit it and don't even know it.

Michael: Because it's not a brandable type. If I go to Seattle.com, yes, it's the location, but it's also a brand that you can recognize whereas kingcountywebsite.com is sort of three words that aren't necessarily as brandable.

Shane: Right, they're not brandable, so we may very well kitsapcounty.com which, that falls under our theme—

Michael: I think you do. I think that's the one that I checked.

Shane: If it were to become available in the after-market, we may snap that up to supplement that. Because that is a better name. The shorter, purer names are by far better for typed in traffic and all those other great things. But the SEO work is what we do to our network and to our clients websites.

Michael: So you'll build a website for a customer. If they have a website and they just want to get that website ranked well, you'll search engine optimize it for them. You have these directories across the United States, you'll add their website to the directory which helps them with inbound links and sharing some of the authority that you have on those websites, right?

Shane: Absolutely.

Michael: Will you manage a customer's—we talked about social campaigns, we talked about video. Will you manage a person's Pay Per Click budget, for example?

Shane: Yes. We sure will. We will even—we don't come out and walk into a business and say, “Can we manage your business email?” but we will, absolutely. We'll set up business email, we'll help them set it up on outlook because again, it's kind of a theme, but when you get to that small business owner, lots of them don't even know how to use email. So you get into that whole—we walk in saying to new customers if those other things like . . . well, Pay Per Click, we would—I put that in the upsell category.

Michael: You're not leading with that. That could be something that you find later they may want to do in addition to some other stuff.

Shane: Right. In general terms, we have a lot to offer with our product base. But there's only so much money that I can extract out of a local business and continue to give them good value and a good return on their investment with that base of products.

But and this is kind of how I describe it. I'm almost going to pretend like you're a prospect and explain it to you in those same terms. Because this is what I would do. But the Pay Per Click side of it—most of that money's going to go to Google. So you need to be able to allocate sometimes 4-10 times, no matter what you're paying me, you're guaranteed that if you're going to go into that Pay Per Click market, effectively you're going to have to spend a lot more. So my goal is, spend as much—reach that max that you can with me first, which is going to be the best return on your investment.

All those things that we can do for you. And then if you have extra money—now that's the key, right?

But it's amazing what you end up seeing. Even some of the smallest businesses, what they've allocated to print budget and just never thought about moving that money or just a portion of that.

And I've got so many stories where—I've got a water softener guy, a water treatment guy. That guy started out with me at a couple hundred dollar a year package. I didn't do his website. And this is kind of the progression. He was one of those clients that first year, as an example, that signed up with me. He didn't make a ton of money off of it, but every year after that, he renewed, and I tried to say, “Hey, are you still happy with your website?”

“Yeah, I'm still happy with it. My buddy did it.”

Next year, renews with me, because I'm doing my job. “You still happy with your website?”

“Yeah.”

Well then all of a sudden one year he says, “I'm not happy with that guy anymore.”

Now the floodgates open. I take over the website. My revenue doubled for that client. Then we expanded to some neighboring counties, then we expanded into some other programs with him, all of a sudden today, it's 10-12 years later, he's maxed out with my program, and I'm trying to talk him into Pay Per Click because even though he's maxed out with my offerings, he spends with me, let's say a penny on the dollar for his ad spend. But I'm probably responsible for well over 50% of his new customers. That doesn't even make sense, but that's—and lots of us that are in this industry would say the same thing. For what they're getting, they're getting a fantastic package.

Michael: So let me ask you a couple questions about that water treatment guy. So when he first started spending money with you for \$200 a year, what were you doing for him? What kind of services were you rendering?

Shane: At that point, it was a just a page on my network.

Michael: So it was an optimized page, separate from his website, you controlled this page, you optimized it, it's on your network so it gets a lot of your network benefit, and it probably rose to higher in the search engines than his other website?

Shane: Absolutely. And when we do that program, again, that gets into—one of your questions was, “What do you start asking these clients, where do you steer them?” Well, if I'm doing a program like that which I would still do today, I'm not trying to compete with his website. So if somebody's Googling—his name is Atlantic Blue Water Services. If somebody's Googling Atlantic Blue and I do this kind of page on my network marketing program, there's not that much value in getting that traffic because they maybe would have found him. I mean, there's plenty of sites that don't come up for searching the names. So my goal is to then—again, that question, “Mr. Business Owner. What makes you the most money in here? Of all your products that you sell—sure, you sell this \$5 water filter over here, this replacement filter—but what about that \$5000 acid neutralizer or well tank system?”

That's the questioning part. So maybe the ad that I put together for that client is just geared towards one or two products. Again, it's bringing him clients that will give him a good return on his investment.

Michael: And then slowly over time he's just giving you more and more business because you asked the right questions and consistently asked them year after year when you were going through the renewal process and when he had a need, you asked at the right time and that's a lot of what business opportunity is. Asking at the right time.

Shane: It's asking at the right time and it's again, getting back to this industry in general, and I don't mean—I'm talking about the web industry now. The website industry. If I were to go into 50 local businesses, even today, this was true 10 years ago, it's probably true today--in any small town in America, and go into 50 small businesses and ask them, “Who does your website?”

I'm probably going to get 50 different answers. That's how fractured the industry is. Somebody's going to be using yellowbook, more of a another ad agency, someone's going to be using their brother, someone's going to be doing it themselves, so it's just all over the place.

Michael: So how does a typical website run a small business? How much does it cost to build it and maintain it on a yearly basis?

Shane: We've structured our package nowadays, which is still a great value for them, and our package is just over \$1,000 for a year.

Michael: \$1,000 per year?

Shane: Yes.

Michael: So in order for you to build me a website, I pay you \$1,000, you build my website, you host it, you do all the updates I want to do, things like that?

Shane: Yes, but it's a trick question, because when I go into a client—when you're talking about building a website, I can build you a website for \$200. So, and I'm happy to tell a small business owner, “I can put your website together.” And that's a phenomenal deal, but it's not going to be fancy; it's going to be 1 page. But I have a camera in my pocket—getting back to that business owner who's doing a million things. He doesn't want somebody to come in and drop a project on his lap if he doesn't have a website. When I get to that category of person, first of all if they say that, “I don't have a website,” my jaw kind of drops.

“What? What do you mean you don't have a website? We need to get you something up ASAP like now.”

So do I want to engage this guy in this—again, small business—in this massive . . . a 5 or 10 page website is massive to these guys. Or, I walk in there with my marketing plan. Do I want to get him something up and running to start grabbing this great business on the internet that he's missing? So that's kind of my sales thing. So how can I do that?

“Well, I can build you a website for \$200, but it's going to cost you \$800 to market it.”

Because our whole philosophy is a website's worthless if it's not marketed. There's a couple spins on that. The other phrase I use sometimes is, “The website doesn't bring customers in your door. The marketing of the website brings the customers in your door.” So that's the theme.

So then I'm presented with that particular client. I don't want to leave money on the table for instance. I'm going to say, “How much—you can give me \$5,000 to build you a fancy website. What's your budget?” at that point. So how much of a website do you want, and I have a bigger marketing program than just \$800 a year. I mean Pay Per Click can run you a couple thousand a month. But it's not a gimmick or a catch. I can do a good job.

Michael: So I know a lot of companies that'll build a website, and it'll be \$2,500 or \$5,000 let's say and it'll be a gorgeous website, 5 or 10 pages, somewhere in that order of magnitude—but that's a one-time fee. And you're actually getting a nice renewal fee every year of \$1000.

Shane: That's right. That's—and we'll do that other program, too. I've got plenty of clients where I go in. I did a home builder last year. This is a great example because, I mean it was a referral. That's how I actually get a lot of my—I almost can't keep up with my referrals at this point, much less cold calling. There's a new bowling alley that just opened up, and I'm like, “I've got to get in there and talk to the guy.”

But this was a referral. A homebuilder. And I went and met him. He just called me up, “Hey, Joe, said to give you a call. You're the man.” So I go and meet him at a house that he's just finished building and this is kind of how I present. It's in person, it's looking at—and then he's proudly showing me the new counters that he just built, this sort of thing. But he says, “We've never had a website. We've never needed a website.” And this is kind of the interesting piece of this now. There's a whole group of people or businesses that didn't need websites before the economy tanked, because business was good. They just never got around to it or whatever. They didn't realize that

websites or internet marketing could bring them customers and now phones have stopped ringing and they're like, "What do we do?"

So this is a great opportunity for anybody to do that. So he says, "I've never had a website. What can you do for me?"

I said, "Well, I can start at \$200 and spend as much as you want."

He goes, "I want a big fancy website. I've never had one. I'm doing this right."

The guy cut me a check for 3 grand for the website and then another 3 grand for a wider net of marketing.

He goes, "Well, I build houses in five counties covering Northern Virginia."

And I said, "We've got to give you a little bigger marketing program."

So the setup—the website building, we do it the same way. That's a one-time cost. We'll go up against any—unless it's broader—but our prices are very fair for web development.

Michael: So for that web development, you'll give them a few different design templates to choose from?

Shane: See, that's a great point. But we do things a little differently. And sometimes it works. Sometimes that's what they might want. But again, I don't—I want to take as many choices away from this business owner as I can.

Michael: Because they don't want all those choices. They don't want to make all those decisions. They want you as the expert to take care of it.

Shane: Right. Some do. But that's not how we operate. I—and again, this is kind of—this is our system. This is the way it is. I'm not a web designer. I'm not a designer at all. I can barely match colors. So I consider myself a salesperson. I'm the face of the company with these clients, but I'm the data

information gatherer. I have my camera, I have my pencil and paper, I'm going to take notes and, sure, if you've got some brochures or something laying around, I'm going to collect this data. And I am going to say, "What are your colors? What's your theme from you logo," and get some basics. I'm not just going to make up something completely out of the blue.

But I gather this information, make all these notes, because I was there, I talked to the owner, I've got this great personal relationship, and then I send it over to my office in Alexandria. I don't go there, we get all the information over to them and they knock out a package.

Michael: So they build the site.

Shane: They like it. They like what we've produced. And if they don't like it, we'll redo it. Nobody's offended because you didn't give us that much input. I didn't ask for input. I'm trying to take a project off your hands.

Michael: So based on the information they give you, based on the marketing collateral they have, you just take that information and you build the website from there? You're not asking them, "Hey, could you write five paragraphs on why you build better homes than your competition?" or anything like that? You're not requiring them to do homework in order for you to build the website?

Shane: No, and actually, almost the reverse is true. If they say, "Let me write something up and get it to you," that's like a red flag for me and I'm like, "Okay, but if I don't have that in 3 days, I'm going to make something up and put a placeholder there because," it all goes back to marketing. I say, we've all seen it—and no disrespect to the company that takes six months to put a website together, it's usually the client's fault going back and forth. "Oh, I didn't give you this exact wording, or I didn't give you that."

Our theory is—it's not a theory—we can't start your marketing until we have a website to market. And even then, once your website's up, that's kind of misleading in some TV commercials that you see that you build it, they will come. You load a website up on the internet and your phone's going to ring off the hook. So I cautiously manage their expectations that, "I'm going to do

this for you, I'm going to do everything I said with this marketing all these great ideas I have for you. But the day your site launches, your phone is not going to ring off the hook.” This is not a billboard that's going up on the highway even though I do use that metaphor. It is a billboard going up on the internet superhighway, I do use that, but Google takes their time in indexing and competing with a billion other websites, and they understand. Again, it's just managing their expectations.

Michael: If you're selling more than \$250,000 in sales per year, let's just call it \$250,000. If your average deal size were \$1,000 a year, that means that you're managing 250 customers per year. What numbers actually work out? What do you think your actual deal size is or how many customers do you actually manage per year?

Shane: Probably now—you're right, if you just use those raw numbers, that is the way it would work out. But my average deal is between—I still have some at \$1000, but I have some that pay me \$12 or \$15 thousand a year. So it's a mix in between there. More of them—I would say the majority of the clients are under \$5000 a year, maybe even under \$3000, in that ballpark.

Michael: How are you getting customers to pay that much money per year in such a terrible economy?

Shane: That's a great question. I would have my own customers ask me that question. I had a guy that does courier business one year. He said, “Shane, I'm in this local town. There's a guy running around,”—the town is Crofton, Maryland—“There's a guy running around with crofton.com.” And those little portals and geo cites are everywhere. I've got a dozen of them in my own community and there's room for everybody. There's a mix.

He says, “That guy can't sell \$25 a year banner ads on his website. But you're selling me a package that's hundreds of dollars a year and obviously you're selling it to other people. How do you do that?”

And I said, “Well, because it works.”

Kind of the one thing I say is, in the competence of service, it gets down to the initial sales process, which we can still talk about more. But it's—they have to trust you. That first year is the biggest trust. I'm not asking you for the money up front. We've always collected the money up front for the year. That's even—talk about a whole other challenge. I'm not billing them. I'm not putting them on a monthly program. I'm saying, “Today, I would like you to give me a check for \$1000 up front.” They go, “Who are you? Who's your company? I've never heard of you. You say you're going to do this?”

So then I say, “Look. I may be the best salesperson,” I mean, I'm not, I'm just a soft salesperson, “I may be able to get this out of you today for this year. But that's not my goal. My goal is that you're going to renew with me next year, and you're not just going to renew with me next year; you're going to be so thrilled with the results, you're going to expand, move more advertising dollars into stuff that I have, whatever it is, you're going to recommend me to your buddy—that's my goal.”

And that's what we do. We work hard. It's not a high maintenance business. It's not a low maintenance business when I said the industry in general—and I'll just say the web industry, the web hosting industry. Is this very cold, “Oh, let me open an account somewhere and throw my website up there and you never talk to anybody.” So that's not us. If you called our company today, a couple of interesting things. A live person would actually pick up the phone and say, “Hello, this countywebsite, how can I help you?” And then if you asked, “Hey, I want to register a domain name.”

“We don't do that.”

“Can I host my website with you?”

“We need to have somebody come talk to you and show you what our packages are.”

Even though we have thousands of domain names in our manual portfolios, we host thousands of websites. We won't consider ourselves a domain registration company. It's almost like the reverse. I would say there's four

components to a website. Domain name, there's hosting, there's design and maintenance, and then there's the marketing.

Everybody starts from the beginning. “Let's get a domain name. Let's find a host, let's put something together,” and then they just forget the fourth part. So we work the opposite way. We walk in and say, “We're here to help you market. If you need a website, fine. It's included in the package. If you need a domain name to go along with it, fine. We don't even have a domain name price.” It's a commodity. We put a great value on our service and the results.

Michael: I think a lot of customers appreciate that, they can understand that. If you come in there and say, “I'm going to build you a website, I'm going to maintain it, I'm going to host it, \$1000 a year,” they know whether you're delivering on that or not. If they have a new service, they email you, Shane, they say, or you stop by, and they're like, “Hey, Shane, I've got a new thing I want to add to the website.” You're like, “No problem! We'll add that.” Great customer service, they can see it up on the website. I don't think anybody would have a problem with that. You're meeting their needs, and their expectations. If they want to get on social, you can do that for them, if they want to do videos, you can do that for them, if they want a mobile site, you can do that for them.

But when we started this show, you said, “I get customers to walk in your front door. I deliver customers to you. That's what we do.” Small businesses are notorious for not knowing where their customers come from. How do you get your business customers to know—first of all, how do you get people to walk into there? You're putting up a website which may rank high in search engines, you're putting up a directory listing where maybe people search and they find them on your directories. How do you know how many people are walking in the front door, calling up your water treatment guy?

Shane: Perfect answer to that is the statistics package. We included that with every program no matter what the program is. SO that doesn't necessarily get them in the door, but what that does—and that's part of my sales process. Getting back to the sales process, I only provide in the sales process—so if I'm selling to a business owner, I give them a quick overview of what I'm

going to do, but unless they start asking the tough questions like you're asking, I may not go into all the detail of everything, because I may just lose them all of a sudden. But if they start asking me—but I would in a general sales process, I would say, “We are going to install a statistics package and track what's most important.”

Again, if I'm getting back to my normal sales mode and you're a client. I'm going to take a step back for a second. We're all in an industry where we think we know—you think you understand what a domain name is, there's lots of people that I go into that they don't even know what a domain is. So I have to say, “Okay, let me start from the beginning.” What is a domain, what is hosting, and that sort of thing.

Michael: You have a stats package. So you can say to the water treatment guy that's a customer of yours, you will tell him on a regular basis or whatever he asks—you tell me what kind of information do you give him regarding how many people visit his optimized webpage that you've created?

Shane: I explain to them that there's three ways people can find your website. They can type in directly—I try to make it as simple as I can. Not over-educate them, but not talk down to them, but I say, “They can type in your domain name, they can link to your website—come in from a link, or they can find you on a search engine. It's going to be one of those three in some fashion.” And the one that I focus on the most—because remember, some of them already have websites, some don't. So I have to throw out the direct access. So I'm focusing on the links from my network, and the search engine traffic. So my report will show—it's just off the shelf software reporting, but it also will collect every search that's done on Google, bing, yahoo, the exact search that was done to bring somebody.

Somebody typed in “well pumps Westminster Maryland” and clicked on your website. I will have a report that shows that. That's pretty standard. But it's not standard for these clients. They don't understand that. So I show that—I actually walk in with a printed 3-ring binder with that—a sample of that search result so I can explain that if they want—and an example of how a search engine works. They may not know that if somebody does a search, clicks on your website, I can track it.

Then the sales tool part of it also is—what's even more valuable than having a statistics package and knowing that people look at your site and how they got to your site. That's very valuable. Most businesses don't even have that or don't have access to it. But the more valuable part is, Shane, who lives and works and knows your business, is going to look at those stats and analyze them for you and with you and then use that data to further tweak your website to get more search results for you.

Again, another way we justify that money—that yearly money—is that it's not a throw it up and forget about it.

Michael: You're managing this process for them. So I went onto countywebsitedesign.com which is the corporate site for everything that you do, and I clicked on the testimonial page. You've got testimonial after testimonial after testimonial from customers saying, “You've brought me more customers than I paid you. I put up a website and the day after, I got a new customer.” It's just phenomenal testimonials. And if I were reading it, of course I would be thinking exactly what you want me to think: that every single customer of yours has a fantastic return on investment.

Is that always the case? Do you lose customers some year just because you just can't get people to walk in their door?

Shane: What's that?

Michael: Do you lose people some years just because you can't people to walk in their front door?

Shane: That's exactly what I was going to say. Sometimes it's not even that. Sometimes it's they don't know if we were responsible for it, so they're cutting the line item out of their budget. But in the scheme of renewals—and this is interesting—our renewal rate is, again, I don't have my exact numbers, but it's between 90-95% annually. And in any industry, I think that's phenomenal. And that also accounts for some businesses are just going to close or retire, so I am factoring that in there.

We have a guy that works for us that is a salesman. I mean, he came to us as a salesman. He didn't know anything about the internet. It didn't matter. He could sell anything. The thing he was selling before he came—he's been with us for about five years now, maybe more, even, but he was selling ads on the back of pharmacy bags. If you go to the pharmacy and get your bag at your grocery store, he would sell ads on there. And he could sell them.

And he said, “Shane, I could not get one renewal. Nobody knew about them.”

So when he came over to us and he started to see that people actually renewed, he wasn't worried about that. He's lovely. It's just a good feeling to help a business owner. I mean, I enjoy what I do. I enjoy—every day I learn from these business owners.

Michael: I do the same thing here on domainsherpa. It feels great to know that you're helping other people. And in your job, what you're doing is you're helping other people keep their business alive or grow their business or be more successful. And that is a great feeling. And so we talked about what you do from a collateral standpoint. You build them a website, you build them videos, you optimize their website, you get them to the top of search engines, you drive more traffic. All this stuff makes sense to me, and you can show that data to the customer if they have time to sit down with you and look at it, but how do you get the customer—your customer—to know where their customers come from? Do you do some sort of coaching with them? Do you say, “If you see a new person come into your shop, ask them how they heard about you”? Do you do any sort of work like that?

Shane: Absolutely. And that's a great point because what we do and what has to be done in that case, is we have to be a consultant to them. And again, that's what separates us from, “Let me go throw a website on a hosting program.” They're missing—they're just missing a lot. So that gets into the whole area of #1 of converting the customer. When they hit the site, technically I can't get the client to walk in their door. So I guess I can't really say, “I'm going to drag somebody into your door.” However, when you're selling in your local community, it is a good feeling to say, “You know what? I'm already a customer here. I didn't know about you, so now I'm going to

become a customer here.” So you can bring in business that way. That's just a nice feeling.

But the conversions—coupons are big for some retail places. Restaurants—they are the worst. They'll never know who's coming in their door.

Michael: So if you can talk them into a coupon, then you know that your customer's customer is going to take a coupon, print it off, go into the restaurant, and then your customer's going to know that they found it through your website. It was your marketing efforts that did that.

Shane: Exactly. Coupons and the other thing that's actually even bigger—we're doing a ton of these—is just lead generation forms. A quick form that can be useful for—and I'd say it's bigger now than ever because more of these small businesses in the beginning, they didn't even have email. And I wasn't going to teach them how to use email, so a lead form was worthless. I'm trying to drive people to their phone. But, boy, do those lead forms—and then, again the beautiful thing is if they get a lead form or a coupon or some tangible evidence, or—let me go to a different school of thought. If I put a picture on their website—remember, we're very personal here. If I go and say, “That's is a fantastic picture.”

A stained glass studio customer of mine had a picture laying around with 6 golden retrievers—and they're in the store—and he's got a picture of him posing with the 6 golden retrievers. “Let's put that on your website. That really differentiates you.” You can't believe—and I see that guy year after year, still renews, ten years now, he says how many people come in his store and saw that picture on the website.

So there's little things like that—things that are on your website that aren't anywhere else. We absolutely hate stock photos. We think that they're the absolute worst to make a personal feel. Sometimes you have to have one or supplement your site with one, that's fine. But when you're talking to a small, local business owner, with so much rich content that you could snap a picture of the outside of just something in there that will all of a sudden—your content that's on the web, no matter what package they have, is unique. And sometimes unique enough where a client will say, “I'm here because.”

Michael: Or not even that. “I saw that picture of that pug or your 6 golden retrievers or whatever. I love golden retrievers!” Suddenly all it takes is that one person saying that, and they've probably got their ROI—their return on investment for the year because that one person said it.

Shane: Yes, they have the ROI and do I need to show them statistics after that? Probably not. That gets into the case where I can show somebody a boatload of statistics, all these people. But if they don't have that warm, fuzzy feeling that somebody actually came, then they could theoretically say, “I don't think this is work I'm going to continue to approve.”

Michael: I'm going to ask you about that warm and fuzzy feeling, but before that, so just to summarize, how do you get your customers to know where their customers are coming from and the answer is, you can show them the statistics, but really they want the hard, tangible evidence. So coupons that are on a website, the lead generation forms that might be on that forward to the business owner that you get a copy of so that you know how many leads are being generated per year, and then your great story about pictures. Putting pictures up so that when people walk into the store, they have something to talk about as soon as they walk in and it may be something that resonates with them personally as well.

Shane: And it can work backwards, too. You do a restaurant—restaurants are interesting because you mentioned that and that they're notorious. They're also notorious for not giving me changes. I don't know if their menu changed. I'm not psychic. So they don't give me the new menu. So how do they know people are looking at their website? When people come in and they're mad that they're getting charged a higher price than what's on their menu. Then I get the phone call, “Oh, I've got to change my menu! I forgot to give it you!” and customers are complaining because of it. So that's kind of the backfire effect of that. But it works. They know they're coming.

Michael: So warm and fuzzy. You said just a moment ago your clients want a warm and fuzzy feeling. They want you to walk in there, they want you to know—they want to know that you're invested in their success.

Shane: That's right. And we say that to them. If you're a prospect, if I can't make you succeed or be successful this year, then I'm not going to succeed. Because if I have a 10% renewal rate, you think I'm going to continue doing this job? No way. It's too hard. It's too much effort to go knock on all these doors in the scheme of things. It's a lot of work.

Michael: So that is terrible news for 80% of the people watching this show, Shane, because most of the people watching own great domain names, they want to put up a directory, they want the money to just come flowing into them, and they don't want to touch any customers because customers are a pain in the you know what.

So, let me ask you this: Is it possible to not have a consulting sort of role with customers? To just host a directory where it gets enough traffic where all you have to do is—in an automated or programmatic fashion, upgrade people's listings and let them input their data into the system to upload their pictures, to upload their own unique information. Is it possible to do that, or in your experience, do you need somebody to help walk the small businesses through that process?

Shane: The answer is you need somebody. In my opinion. Today, ten years ago, today and for probably a while, at least for a certain category. There's a new crop of business owners coming up.

It's funny when I'm in a business and he's talking about his ten year old kid, and then ten years later, the kid's the one now having to get him to write me a check. We have to change so that the Do It Yourself kind of thing—is there the technology out there to do that? I think absolutely. I've seen some great methods. We have it. You can go on any of our county websites outside of our core area, and you can sign up for a \$9 a month link. I mean that's just kind of our placeholder for our network. Hey, we figure we're putting up these networks, we've built this great network across the country in preparation for who knows what, but we just want to be ready to expand. But if a business finds our network—this is kind of the flip side—if a business finds our network, they feel everybody's finding it. So they're willing to pick—so that's where the answer for most people who want to automate it is, yes, it can work. We get people that sign up for that, and the better—if you

can just build it, build a good network—again, that effect that the business owner finds—and I do see that a lot, then they feel that everybody else is finding it and they will pay for that.

Now Google's doing free sites. So you think, my kids are like, “You're going out of business, dad! Google's giving away free websites! And so and so says that they're doing them for \$2 a month. How can you stay in business?” Well, I've only ever seen one Google site locally. And I've got all these sales reps and we see—you figure when you talk about closing ratios and cold calls—we see, well, we obviously don't sign everybody up. So we see ten times the amount of situations than we actually sign up. I've never seen a Google website until last week, and the only reason I saw it is because my sales rep in Virginia, they were taking it over. The guy's not happy with it. He got what he paid for. He just couldn't manage it. He didn't have the time and it wasn't—

Michael: So what you're talking about, Google has actually had these initiatives where they'll go into cities and they'll try to educate small business owners how to get their own website, how to get it up on Google, and maybe take control of their Google Places listing. And so they do this, but what you're saying is that small business owners need some help in managing this process and they don't want to do it themselves, and sometimes it's over their head or it's just more time than they want to spend on it? They want to spend time running their business, the thing that they love, not running a website.

Shane: Yes, but again in the scheme of things, there's so much small business out there. There really is. So even if I say, you know, that's not going to work. Even if I said 95% of small businesses need help, 5% of small businesses—that's a lot of small businesses out there that don't need that help that would be willing to do the automated and pay. And will that percentage increase over the next number of years? Sure, probably. There's plenty of business for all models, in my opinion, and all methods.

Michael: How much traffic do you need to make sure that a customer is receiving in order to get a proper return on their investment, Shane?

Shane: It depends on the client. It almost gets down the basics of ad sales. Even though I never did ad sales before this, I did actually food sales which was—actually gave me a great perspective, because food sales for an industrial food service company—I'm going into a restaurant to sell them bottled ketchup. Well, they're already in business. They're already using bottled ketchup. What's my game? Is it price? “I'm selling Heinz bottled ketchup.” “What's your price?” So that's what it does come down to. I had to ramp up my service level. Get them to like me. Get them to trust me. Why are you going to buy my ketchup? Maybe mine's a penny cheaper, maybe mine's a penny more, but maybe I have better service.

The whole service method is key for us.

Michael: But let me get back to the question. How much traffic—we talked about doing all these things and at the end of the day, it's the stats package, and it's how much traffic you're giving them, how many leads you're giving them, how many new customers they see coming in. But if you just look at the stats, I'm sure a lot of the customers, they don't have coupons, and they don't have leads coming in through an email system. How much traffic do you need to give them in order to say, the \$1000 I'm giving you per month is worthwhile?

Shane: It's per year.

Michael: I'm sorry, per year.

Shane: But some do it per month, too, so that's legitimate.

Again, it depends. Is it a pizza place where—how many pizzas do they have to sell to recoup their \$1000? We'll use that \$1000 as a number anyway. So is it a pizza place? How many pizzas—so their stats are going to have to be—the raw numbers are going to have to be much higher than my home builder. If he sells one new home because of that—let's say he gave me 6 grand last year. If he sells one new home or one addition, I've heard this from a lot of my clients in that industry, a guy that builds wine cellars or a guy that builds homes, high ticket items. They sell one? That's paid for my program for a year or two.

So their stats don't necessarily have to be as high and again in the scheme of having the ability to manage statistics and look at a broad view. I can look at—and have over the years—thousands of different business statistics. I have a really unique perspective. Our whole company does. From restaurants to hair salons to dentists, all in the local area. Homebuilders don't get searched as much as restaurants. So it's almost like—I'm almost guaranteed I'm going to get more searches to the restaurant, so their stats are going to be higher, but they have to be higher, like you said, to make the return on investment.

It really just depends. And that coupon or that lead—I have a dry cleaner that's a customer. How many shirts do they have to—at 99 cents or \$1.29—to pay for it, right? A lot. But, again, it's a big difference in—I guess if this was an automated system, they would lose the ability because how many fur coats do they have to clean, or how many wedding dresses do they have to preserve to pay for it? So that's what I bring to the table. And walking into that business and say, “Wow, you do wedding dress preservation.” Of course 90% of your business might be dress shirts that goes through here, but if I get you fur cleaning—and this is the real story from a local dry cleaner.

I cold called 20 dry cleaners. And it's like one of those days where I told you I cold call everybody, and the only places that I skip would be big box stores. Because that's of no use to me to go in and get recommended to Wal-Mart corporate. That's not what we're doing. I'm local. We were doing that before it was a thing. So I was actually training a rep. They were walking around with me that day and I said, “You know, I have never sold a dry cleaner. I have no success with dry cleaners for whatever reason. They have a low end product, they're not willing to spend the money, they're big on coupons—the local coupons. I've never had any success.” I said, “But let's go in, because I'm telling you from a sales point, you should bang on every door and just walk in.”

I walked in, presented the program, that lady wrote me a check on the spot on the first time I met her. They're still a customer, that client. And then she gave me a testimonial at one point where, I had somebody for somebody from California do a Google search for fur cleaning, and my website came

up, and I got business from them because in California, maybe the dry cleaners don't specialize so much in fur cleaning. So normally you would say, "Oh my dry cleaner, they only draw business from two miles around their thing." But again, if you target the higher dollar ones, they can make some money off it.

Michael: You make it sound really easy, Shane. You make it sound like, "I walked into this dry cleaner and by the end of the meeting, I had a check in my hand." But if I walk into any small business in my local town, they're busy. They've got customers there that are walking in and out of the shop. How do you actually cold call a business and get more than two minutes to talk to them before they're interrupted by a phone call or by a customer walking in?

Shane: That's exactly how it is with small businesses. When I'm—if I'm training a rep or giving advice, I almost—and I didn't mean to lead off with a close—it does happen. But it is absolutely not the biggest percentage of my closes.

And I use this kind of as a story where I've sold four packages in a day before. That's the truth. How—in the sales cycle process, how did I do those four? Well, one of them was a one call close. Two of them were the normal sales process, meaning they were about my fourth or fifth time in there and they told me they might be interested, and that's why I kept coming back, and they actually closed that day. That was the day when they were like, "Okay, I'll close." And then the fourth one that day, it was getting towards the end of the day, I was taking pictures of three different places, and I was like, "This is my best day ever. I've just signed three up in a day." Then I get a phone call from a guy that I had kind of stopped calling on a few months before because I'd—I'm only going to bang on your door so many times. I'm going to keep going until you tell me to stop. But at some point, I'm going to stop. And that guy called me months later and said, "Shane, we're finally ready."

You don't get that—that happens about as much as a one call close. Sit by your phone and hold your breath for that.

So the majority of calls—and this is probably true of any sales in any industry—we say five times. You have to bang on that business five times. And so the next logical question is, how many businesses do you have to see in a day to accomplish that? Well, if you're starting out from scratch, that whole first year—it's easy. I mean, it's easy for me if I went into an area that I didn't have any customers. I could be in 50 businesses in a day easily. Now that means I probably didn't do a lot of presentations, I'm in and out and the guy was busy, the guy's not there, so—

Michael: So if they're busy or not there, you drop off a business card and some sort of printed collateral?

Shane: Actually, I don't. Great question, and again, everybody might have their different techniques. But it all boils down to where I'm cold calling. I'm cold calling in my local community in an area. I'm not going three hours away and blitzing an area. If I was, I would do that technique. I would blitz an area, catch you if I could, leave information everywhere, nothing wrong with that method, but it's not how we've been successful. We want our reps to live in the area where they live.

So if I go in and they're busy, sometimes I almost hope that they're busy that first time. Because I walk in, they're visibly busy, maybe I don't even know who the owner is, I just say, “Hey, I'm just in the area, I'm here to talk to you about some local advertising,” or “I've got some questions,” whatever my opening kind of may be and they're busy. But I say, “I see you're busy. Let me just get one of your business cards and I'll stop by the next time I'm in the area.” And they appreciate that, actually. They're like, “Wow, he's not a pushy sales person,” and really what they're probably thinking is, “Good, got rid of that guy!” and pat themselves on the back.

Then I show up the next day, and they're like, “Wow! That guy wasn't—he's the real deal!”

Michael: You will actually show up the next day, not like a week later?

Shane: I would probably go in the next day because I work in geographic areas. So let's say, we'll use a strip mall as an example. Doesn't matter. An

industrial park a strip mall. I'm walking into every door of that strip mall. Some of them are going to be closed, some of them are going to be busy in the middle of lunch, some of them are going to be not there, so my odds are I'm only going to get to see one or two of the clients. So my best chance of catching those other people is to come back probably the next day, but at a different time of the day. Maybe I was in there the morning that first day, then I do the afternoon the second day so I try to catch—I don't want to wait another week because the guy's slammed busy on Wednesday—and this is just another little trick, but if you go in and they're slammed busy on a Wednesday, the odds are maybe Wednesdays are a busy day. Shoot for another day. Maybe not Thursday, but Friday or maybe wait until Monday to go in. You learn little tricks like that.

Florists. Don't ever go into a florist's before noon. Period. That I won't do now if I'm cold calling, because I know that that's when they're bumping all their deliveries out. My chances—unless I'm just going in to quickly grab a business card and leave, that's going to be tough.

Michael: So when you walk into a store, what's your opening line?

Shane: Generally, I've got a couple different variations, but I just say, “Hey, I'm Shane with countywebsite,” and usually I announce the local site, “I'm with carrollcountywebsite and I'm here to just ask you a couple of questions about your business. I want to talk to you about advertising.” Generally, I lead off with the advertising thing because it's a very strong distinction.

Nobody has a website budget unless you're a big car dealer with an IT guy, you've got a website budget. The small businesses, they don't have a website budget. But they have an advertising budget. So you have to speak their language. So if you want to talk about advertising, and again the website thing, like I said about throwing their hands up, they'll do that if you say, “I'm here to talk to you about a website.”

Michael: So do you actually announce yourself first or do you say, “Is the business owner available?” or “Is the manager of the store available?”

Shane: You're asking the best questions. I announce myself and talk to whoever I run into first. And again, here's why, it's because of the businesses that I'm calling on. If I was calling on a Wal-Mart as an example, that would be ridiculous. But if I'm calling on a small local business where there's just an employee, a couple of employees, a proprietor—I don't know who it is. Number one, that might be the business owner that I'm talking to and lots of business owners will let you know they're the business owner because that's their job is to kind of greet people. But if it's a young girl a teenager at the counter, I will actually announce myself and say, “Hey, I'd like to show you some stuff about advertising or whatever,” if they're the wrong person and they know it, they'll say, “Oh, hold on. Let me get the right person.”

But it makes them feel important. And I can't even begin to tell you how many sales we've made because—we're getting somebody on our side. If it's a young girl, maybe it's their kid. But also if it's a young person and it's an older, seasoned business owner, who now has got this newfangled internet marketing thing to deal with, he may defer to that young person where they—any other business decisions, that would be ridiculous. So I'm happy to do that, to talk to that person, make them feel important, and then that helps me extract a little bit of information. “Okay, the guy's not here today.” “Oh, can I give you a two minute overview of what I'm here about?” Because in that two minute overview, I can find out if they have a website, what that website address is, and is the person who I'm talking to happy with the website. Just to get some feedback to prep me for that second visit. I'm clearly not going to get a check at that time, and I know that, but I'm already there, I'll take a couple extra minutes and feel them out.

And one other thing that's interesting about that, I wanted to make sure I made this comparison even though it's a big difference between telemarketing, for instance, and cold calling. I hate the term cold calling, but that's what it is. I like to go in and say, “I'm here to help your business.” You have to take it the right way. If they're offended or they shove you out the door, it's their loss. Of course, I'm not making any money, but it is their loss, and I'm taking the position of, look, I'm really here to help them. If they're not going to give me the time of day and appreciate that, I'm going to walk next door and talk to somebody who will.

Michael: So you said five times you typically have to interact with a customer before they will order something from you if they're going to order something from you. Does that mean five touches in any sort of way like one time you walk in, another time you call, a third time you send them an email?

Shane: I mean five times in the door.

Michael: Five times in the door.

Shane: Yes, because again—and again, I'm not the best salesperson over the phone. But if I'm going to try to—and I do make appointments, don't get me wrong. If somebody says, “I only work on—you've got to call so and so for an appointment,” I'll pick up the phone and call Dr. Smith for an appointment. Maybe he'll give it to me, maybe he won't.

Michael: But you've had success because you walk in the door. They know you, they know what you look like, if you walked in today, and they were too busy, and you said, “I'll stop by again later,” and you come in the next day, they're going to remember you came back in because they were too busy and they're going to appreciate that.

Shane: That's right. So the five times—it's a great point. It doesn't mean that I'm spending an hour five times. That first time may be—and I am counting this as number one—walk in, get a business card—oh here's the other piece of information I like to ask that young person at the counter. “When is the owner here, by the way? When is a good time to catch him?” and “What's his name?” Because those things—then the second time that I walk in, and there's no amount of research you can do to get that kind of information. You go in, you get that little bit of information. Now I know, okay, well Joe is in here on Wednesdays between 3 and 5. And I may even ask them a little bit more, like “Is that a good time to catch him?” I don't want to catch him when he's accepting all his deliveries for the week. And that person can tell you that. I showed up at the appropriate time.

Michael: So a couple of follow up questions from things that I've written down on topics that we've discussed already, Shane.

On the stats issue—I know I keep going back to stats—how often do you provide those to your customers? Is it monthly, is it yearly, quarterly?

Shane: Stats are important. I would in general terms, we review them internally quarterly is what we tell our websites—to look at your customer stats quarterly and to give them or review them with your client almost quarterly is a good number. If you've got a client that says, “I want to look at my stats every day,” the number one question I would ask is, “You're not busy enough. If you've got time to do that, I'm not doing my job getting you enough customers.”

But we can issue them codes to get in and look at their own statistics, too. But again, when dealing with small business owners, it's on an as-needed basis. If they ask me, “I wish I could look at them all the time by myself,” we can do that. But I don't go ahead and offer it, because now I have to train you how to look at your stats and tell you what you're looking at.

Michael: But you do have some customers that'll say, “Email me my daily stats every day.” And you can go into your system and set it up to email them?

Shane: Oh, we would just give them codes to go right into their own stats package.

Michael: So in the event that you have a fantastic day. You walk into a business, you sit down with them for 30, 60 minutes, you sell them a package, you get the check—is there actual paperwork that you have them sign before you take money from them on what will be delivered, what you're going to deliver for them for that compensation?

Shane: Yes. We have a typical two part invoice, actually, that details just in rough terms two things: the product that they bought, so that all parties know what they bought, and the period of time that we are committing to do that for them. And it is in writing. We get their signature.

If there's a domain name involved, we actually have a separate one that we say, “Hey, let's be clear about this up front. We're registering you a

domain—you may not understand,” again, the business owner, “you may not understand all the implications of what a domain name is, that they're hijacked, that they can be this and that, but we're putting it on paper that we're registering it for you, we'll put it in our portfolio, it's going to be on lockdown, it's going to be on auto-renew, but it's your name. We're not going to hold it hostage.” And that makes people feel good even a little. They're just clueless sometimes.

Michael: Shane, I spent a number of years in corporate America. I went through a lot of training sessions. I hated when I went through a training session and people said, “Okay, we're going to do some roleplaying now. Pair up with somebody and I'm going to give you a scenario that you need to do.” Because it always put me on the spot. But when I did it, I always got a lot more out of it.

So what I want to do with you, and I didn't clear this with you before, I want to do a role-play. I want to be a coffee shop in my small town, and I'd like—in your small town—and I'd like you to come walk in the door and go through your typical scenario, and I want to throw out a couple things and see how you react to them. Can we do that?

Shane: Sure.

Michael: Here, I'm working at the barista machine, I'm pouring some coffee. All right. Go ahead. You walk in.

Shane: So I'm going to walk in and I'm going to look around, maybe comment that I hadn't been in there before and say, “Hey, do you have just a few minutes of time for me to let me explain what I'm doing here today and what I can—how I can benefit your business?”

Michael: Sure, I've got the morning rush, but if you want to talk, I'll continue to work the bar and you can tell me what you need to tell me.

Shane: Do you have a website?

Michael: I do not. I'm on yelp and I get most of my business from yelp.

Shane: What we do—and at that point, to be honest with you, what I'm doing at this point is I'm opening my book as a visual aide. I have not a laptop, I just have a book, and I'm saying, “Number one, we need to get you a website. We need to get you a domain name.”

Michael: I don't need a domain name. I'm on yelp. My kids tell me everybody goes on yelp.

Shane: And I'm sure you probably get good clients that come in and tell you that they saw you on yelp, I would imagine, and that's a great marketing tool. This will definitely supplement that. Yelp is like a directory system where you're listed. There's a lot of different directories out there.

What I'm offering to you, because you don't have a website, is a static website where you can tell your story, that people can't put a bad review—it'll just be your story. And the main thing I'm going to do for you is bring you business that you're not getting. That's what I'm going to do for you. So, I truly believe that yelp is bringing you maybe a ton of business, but do you think that there's business that you might be missing out there?

Michael: When I type in “Mike's Coffee Shop” in Virginia, I come in right at the top, but it's my yelp listing. Are you going to get me above that yelp listing?

Shane: I could probably get you above the yelp listing with your website and then, so there's kind of two benefits to this. If we do a website in addition to your yelp listing, and somebody does that search for “Mike's Coffee Shop,” whether your yelp listing comes up above whatever I do, or comes up below, what you've just done is now you've got two spots on that search result. So something has to get pushed off the page, and maybe it's your competitor's coffee shop that gets bumped off the page. So there's kind of one benefit to that secondary marketing option online and then the other piece of that is, I'm now showing you my network. This is where anybody with any kind of geodomain has a wildcard, has something that somebody doesn't have—a normal webmaster would have to stop at that point. But I'm going to show you, Mike, that I have a category for coffee shops in here and I don't have a

coffee shop right now, so everybody that comes into my network that looks at this food and drink page, you might be on yelp but they're not here, and then I'm not going to promise it, but then I'm going to say, what are some of your—do you do catering?

Michael: I do catering and I make a lot more money on catering than I make on I do on these \$2 coffee drinks. I don't make any money on these coffee, basically. I try and upsell them on other things. If I can get somebody to come in and buy a sandwich whenever they bought a coffee, that would be a great thing. How can I do that?

Shane: Well, let's put your menu online. Let's get your full menu online, let's get your catering menu online, let's do some additional search marketing so that when local businesses in the area are searching for party platters for their office luncheon, that they're not thinking of a coffee shop when they think of these party platters or something. And now we're talking about search marketing, so my program's going to give you a website, but the bonus piece is this marketing. You're going to be on my directory, so we talked about that, so let's talk about search engine marketing, if somebody is Googling “catering platters in this area” I can't promise that you're going to come up for that search, but here's what I can promise you: that my company knows more than any other company in the area on how to make this happen, and we will almost work tirelessly to get you up for these profitable searches, and when we do get you up for them, I will open up and show you some statistics. We're going to track it for you, so that even if you're not tracking it because you're busy pouring coffees, we're going to track this thing for you and we'll supplement that business.

I totally believe that you're getting business from yelp, but there's more business that you're not getting.

Michael: All right, Shane. You've almost got me convinced there. You did a great job on that. All right, let me ask you this. We're coming up on 80 minutes, and you've been fantastic to give up this much free time when you could be out there selling. You could've brought in \$500,000 this year if I hadn't taken up as much time, but I appreciate it. I just want to ask you a few more questions if you have another five or ten minutes?

Shane: Absolutely.

Michael: What kind of businesses do you find easier to sell, and what kind of businesses are always hard to sell and you will pass on if you have some other opportunity?

Shane: That's another great question, and I have to answer it by saying, you just can't predict that going in.

Michael: Really? You can't say restaurants notoriously have small margins so I'm going to go for the architects or the home and garden companies or the retailers?

Shane: Some of my smallest clients, a small local bakery—is one of my biggest money customers. She can't predict necessarily how much somebody's willing to spend. But if I had to historically pass up a category of businesses that are harder, I would say the professional services because they're almost 100% of the time going to have a gatekeeper, meaning if I go into a, it doesn't matter if it's a dentist, a doctor, a lawyer, I'm not going to run into the doctor, or the dentist like I may in a small business.

But on the other hand, the dentist or doctor sometimes doesn't make the decision. Sometimes it's the office manager who is the person I run into. So that's why I say even that isn't necessarily the best example, but . . .

Michael: Do you go into local papers and say, whoever's advertising in the local papers is my first target because they already spend money?

Shane: Yes. Local papers, any of the mail that I get at my house, absolutely. If I had to pick—and I'm going to get back to your other question—if I had to pick and choose, I would pick businesses that I thought could draw from a bigger market or do service in a bigger market, because I can sell them a bigger package. So getting back to the dry cleaner. I'm probably never going to be able to sell a dry cleaner more than my most basic package. But a log irrigation business that covers two states with their fleets of trucks, I'm

probably going to sell him a bigger package. So if I had to pick and choose at that point, I would pass up every dry cleaner and go to the irrigation guys.

Michael: So if there are some people out there that have their own directories that have decided that they want to create that warm and fuzzy feeling with customers and they want to have that service attitude as well as the directory services, and they want to go out and hire some sales people, do you hire your sales people that you have underneath you on a contractor basis, or as employees?

Shane: That's more out of my area. I don't do any of that. But traditionally as employees. And we haven't done a lot of—hiring salespeople's tough. It's just a tough industry, it's a tough business. Finding the right people, and when you find them, you hope that they stick with you. We have a great crew. We have a range of people who some of them have been on almost as long as I have, 8 years, to 5 years, to 3 years, to maybe our most recent one that's on board at this point has been with us for a year now. But we have done the contractor side too, but that's more from our office standpoint.

Michael: Let's see. I'm just looking through my notes here to make sure I have everything. When you set up a website and you say, “We're going to add coupons to your website also,” is that just all part of the package?

Shane: No, those are add-ons.

Michael: Those are add-ons. What would a coupon add-on typically cost a customer per year?

Shane: We try to keep our pricing somewhat flexible but roughly, say \$50 a month which is, say \$500 a year as an average.

We have two types of products. We have set up products, one time construction fees, that whole lead form that you mentioned, that's just a—we're going to build that, that's going to be a one-time set up. The coupon, we charge more for that. Here's why. It's the marketing piece. They probably need a lot of updates on the coupon. They want to change the offers, maybe we offer the service where we change it for them, maybe give

them access to change it. Either way, it's fine, but we also have a special coupon page on our directory, so we say, "We're actually going to search optimize these coupons differently, we're going to market it a little differently," and because of that it's worth some extra money to do it that way.

Michael: All right, Shane, so the final question is this. What's the one final sales tip that you can leave the audience with who needs to get moving on their sales? They're just stagnant and they don't want to get into the sales process. What would you say to them?

Shane: There's nothing easy. They don't want to get into any type of sales or—what I would say is start in your backyard. Again, this is different. If you have a geo that actually is in your area, but if you've got some that aren't in your area, the first thing that I would say is put a little effort into the directory. Into the guide. Because you're going to get that question. If I was selling on baltimore.com and I walked into you and said, "I'm Shane with baltimore.com, I'd like you take out an ad on my network." What's the first question you're going to ask me?

Michael: How much traffic do you have?

Shane: Exactly. I don't want that question. I sidestep that question. So now you're a coffee shop and I walk in and say, "I'm with carrollcountywebsite and I have optimized my network enough to where if you search 'restaurants carroll county maryland' my directory is in the top 10 of Google." So that is—that can be, that one little piece of information can be more valuable than saying—let's say I answered your question. "I have a million visitors to baltimore.com" What does that mean? Am I making it up, am I not, whatever. If you're going to pursue this sales with a geo package, the first thing is to make sure that there's value in your geo portal. One way or another.

We didn't go the route of—our geo portals are simple. They are just bare bones, more just business directory types. So that's one angle, but especially in our local market, our network dominates searches for hundreds of different searches. We own space for auto repair, hair salons, generic searches,

restaurants. If you can manage that side of it, then if you get your network to come up, then sometimes the sales will come. People will inquire. So put an inquiry form, try to do something minor that's automated on your site, but you don't want to—you have to put the effort into it. It's the content. I think lots of people would agree with that. You don't want to go and start buying Pay Per Click ads to send people to your portal to buy advertising and then all of a sudden you've washed everything out and you're not making any money. Well, it looks like you're making it on one hand, but you're spending it on the other and that's not good.

Michael: If you have a follow up question for Shane, please post it in the comments below and we'll ask him to come back and answer as many as he can. Please take a moment right now to thank Shane in the comments below. If you're listening via MP3, maybe on your commute or during a workout, make a note, come back to this page and say thanks. It only take two minutes to do so and it's a great way for our guests who have taken time out of their schedule to come on the show and it's a great way to say thanks to them.

Also, if people want to learn more about the offerings that Shane's talking about today, they can go to countywebsite.com, they can visit countywebsitedesign.com, or they can search on Facebook for countywebsite and they can like countywebsite and then you'll get updates on everything that is new and exciting at your business.

Shane Wells, sales manager at countywebsite.com, thank you for being at domainsherpa sharing your sales expertise and thank you for helping others become more successful entrepreneurs.

Shane: I hope that some things that I've said can help some people. That's it. I mean that's almost the same great feeling as helping a local business is helping other people succeed in their business. The same thing.

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

Watch the full video at:

<http://www.domainsherpa.com/shane-wells-countywebsite-interview/>