SELFMADECODEX · FLYNN

He did not start with a business idea. He started with study notes.

After losing his architecture job in the 2008 recession, Pat Flynn turned exam preparation into his first digital product.

Selfmade CODEX

The story in numbers

over $200,000

Flynn grossed more than $200,000 during his first year of sellin

REPORTED

more than $1.6 mil

Flynn grossed more than $1.6 million in revenue during the 12 mo

REPORTED

roughly $115,000

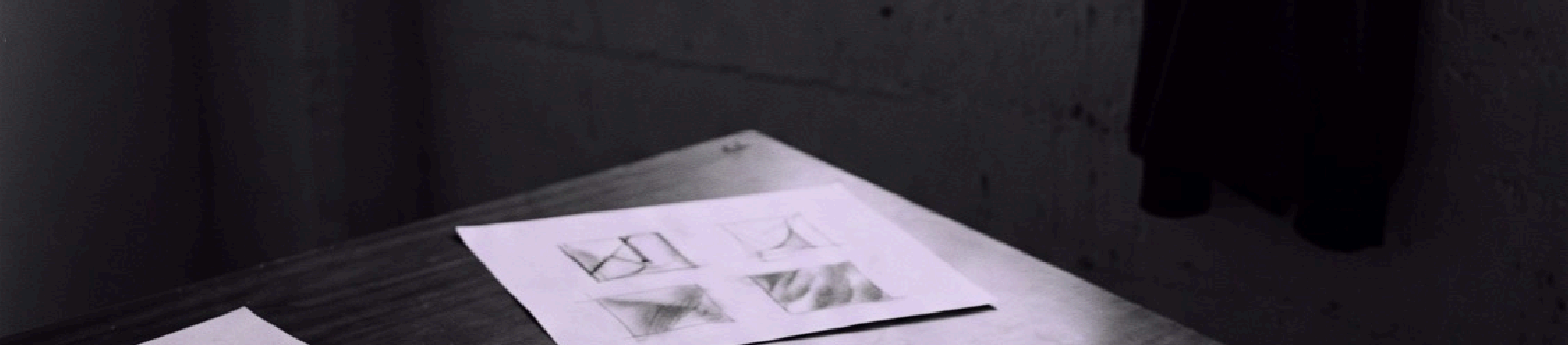
In June 2016, Flynn's passive income sources brought in roughly

REPORTED

Where the numbers come from

Every figure in this document was checked against its original source. Here is how they break down:

> The bulk of his income for that month, $72,800, came from several affiliate programs
>
> CAPITALISM.COM FALLSTUDIE · INDEPENDENTLY REPORTED



The path

2007

Flynn began studying for the LEED exam while employed in an architectural firm.

2008

He was laid off during the recession and published a paid LEED study guide.

OCTOBER 2008

The material reports that the LEED study guide sold 309 copies and generated $7,906.55 including advertising earnings.

2009

The material states that Flynn founded the Smart Passive Income blog and podcast in 2009.

2010

The Capitalism.com case study says Flynn began the Smart Passive Income Podcast in 2010.

2013

The material reports that Flynn's first book project involved the Snippet platform and that he discussed it in a podcast interview.

2016

The material reports that Flynn's income in June 2016 was roughly $115,000, with about 70 percent remaining after expenses.

2017

The material reports that Smart Passive Income generated $2,171,652 for the year ending December 2017.

APRIL 2026

The About SPI page states that Liz Wilcox purchased SPI.

01

From Layoff to Smart Passive Income

Pat Flynn did not begin with a business empire. He began with notes for an exam he was already studying for.

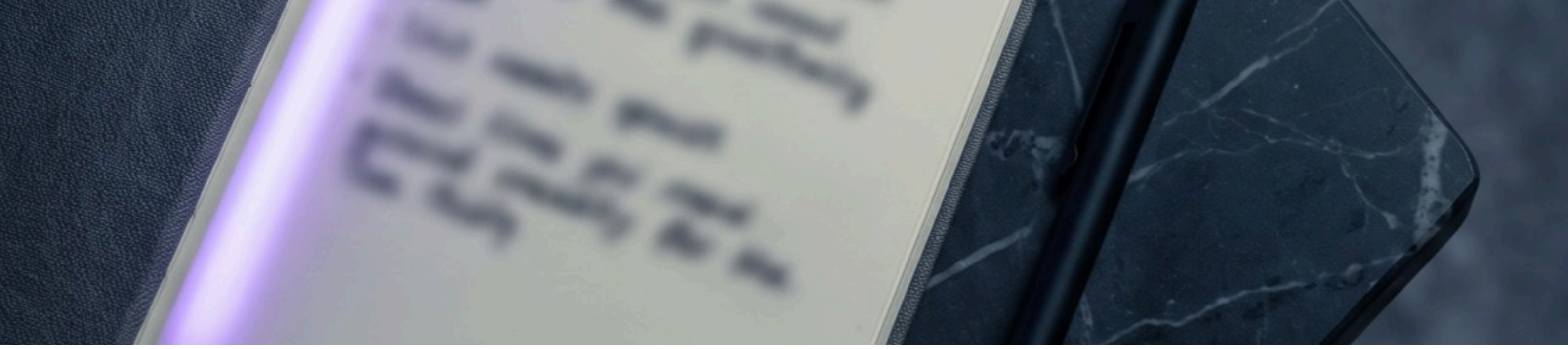
Before becoming an online entrepreneur, Flynn worked as an architect and studied architectural design at the University of California, Berkeley. The 2008 recession ended that job.

He had been preparing for the LEED exam. That meant he already had research, notes, and a specific problem he understood. Friends encouraged him to share what he knew.

He created a blog to organize his LEED study notes. In October 2008, according to his own account, he published an 89-page study guide called The LEED AP Exam Walkthrough.

- The first step was not a broad personal brand.
- It was a narrow problem he had already spent time learning about.
- The first product came after the useful material existed.

> The layoff and education details are documented facts. The blog and October 2008 publication date are self-reported by Flynn.



02

The Business Model

The first offer was a study guide. The larger model grew around the audience that found it useful.

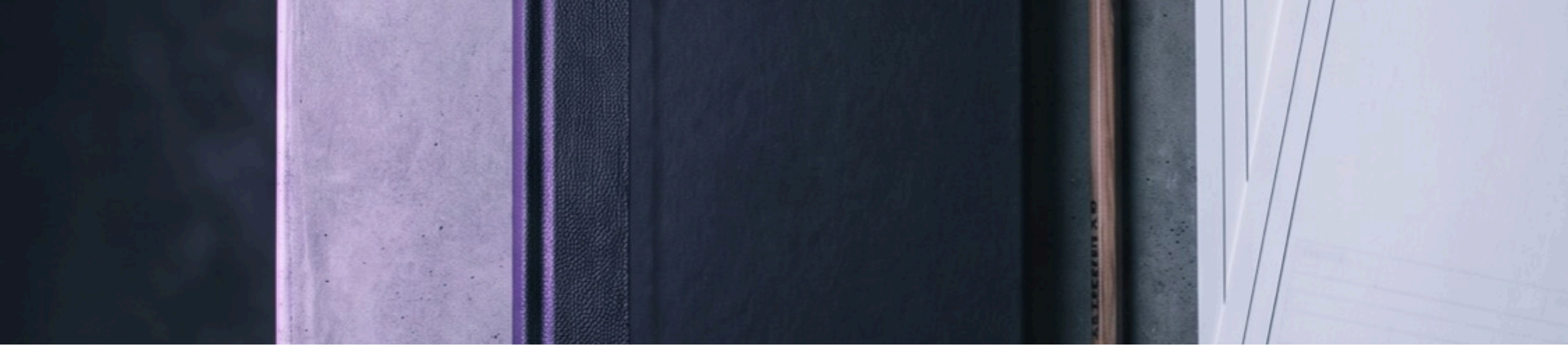
Flynn sold the LEED study guide through his website. He then added free articles and further study materials, including ebooks, audio guides, and practice exams.

Over time, Smart Passive Income expanded into a media and education business. Its model combined content with several forms of monetization: digital products, affiliate marketing, advertising, podcast sponsorships, courses, books, software, apps, coaching, and consulting.

The central exchange stayed recognizable. Free content helped people understand the problem and Flynn's approach. Paid products offered a more structured way to solve it.

- Free educational content
- Digital products and courses
- Affiliate recommendations
- Advertising and sponsorships
- Books, software, apps, and services

> The model changed over time. The first study guide was narrower than the later Smart Passive Income ecosystem.



03

The Steps That Built It

The sequence matters. Flynn did not start by building every possible channel.

First, he studied for the LEED exam and collected material around a defined need. Then he organized that material into a blog so other people could find it.

Next, he turned the accumulated notes into The LEED AP Exam Walkthrough, an 89-page guide priced at $19.95, according to his own account. He sold it through the website.

After the first offer, he added more free content and related products. He later launched the Smart Passive Income blog and podcast, using content to reach people beyond the original exam niche.

The expansion followed the initial evidence. It did not require a complete product ecosystem on day one.

- Understand one specific problem
- Publish useful material publicly
- Package the knowledge into a clear first offer
- Sell the offer directly through a website
- Add related formats after the core offer exists
- Build broader channels around the work

> The material does not establish a precise timeline for every later channel. The sequence above follows the documented narrative.

04

How It Was Monetized

The first revenue came from a small digital product and advertising. The later business used several independent revenue paths.

Flynn says the study guide sold 309 copies in its first month and generated $7,906.55, including advertising earnings. These figures are self-reported.

The business later added ebook sales, affiliate marketing, advertising, podcast sponsorships, online courses, book royalties, software and apps, coaching and consulting, and niche websites.

That variety was not the starting point. It was the result of continuing to publish, learning what the audience needed, and creating offers around established attention.

- Start with one paid offer
- Keep free content connected to a real problem
- Recommend products only when they fit the audience's need
- Use sponsorships when the audience and format support them
- Add new revenue streams without losing the original problem

> No income figure should be treated as a forecast. The early sales and revenue figures are self-reported by Flynn.

05

Growth Without Hiding the Process

Flynn made the business visible while it was being built. That became part of the product's credibility.

He published educational content consistently and expanded it into blog posts, podcasts, videos, email, social media, and other formats. He also used affiliate marketing to recommend products he said he had used and trusted.

A notable part of the strategy was the publication of detailed monthly income reports. They gave readers a view of revenue sources and business decisions rather than showing only a polished final result.

The audience could follow both the teaching and the experiment. That created a second subject for the content: how an online business was being built.

- Publish where the audience already looks for help
- Reuse a strong idea across suitable formats
- Make recommendations relevant and transparent
- Show decisions, constraints, and results carefully
- Let the process itself become useful content

> The income reports are documented as a public practice. Individual financial figures in the source material should still be read in their original context.

06

Mistakes And Difficult Parts

The available material does not identify one specific business mistake by Flynn. That absence matters.

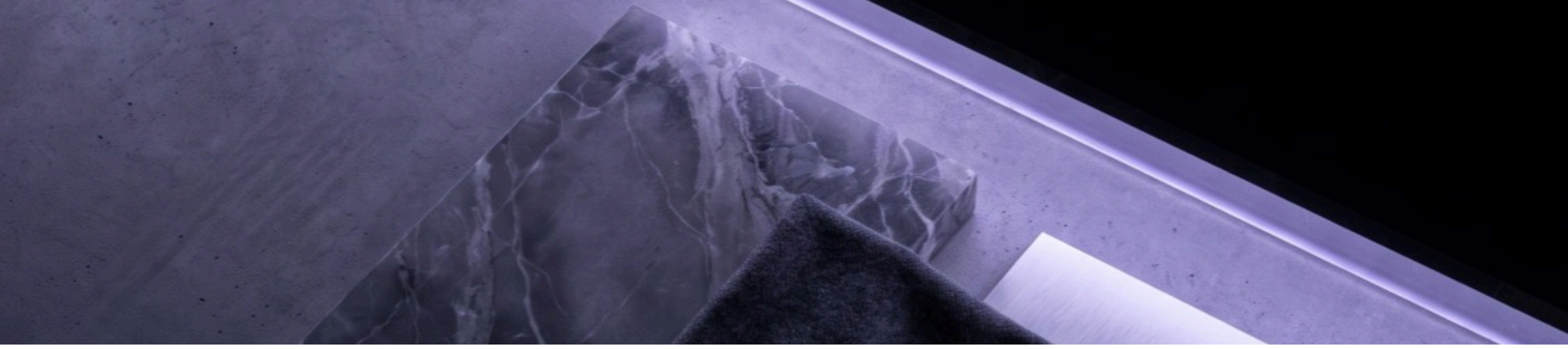
A clean founder story can make the path look more orderly than it was. Here, the evidence supports a sequence of offers and channels, but it does not support inventing a dramatic failure, a precise turning point, or a universal formula.

The difficult parts are easier to see in the structure. Flynn had to move from professional expertise into public teaching, turn information into a product, find people with the same need, and keep the business credible as it expanded.

He also had to manage a growing set of revenue sources without confusing the audience about what the business was for. The story is not proof that every new channel will work. It is evidence that the first useful offer can remain the reference point while the model develops.

- Do not confuse public visibility with easy execution
- Do not treat several revenue streams as a starting requirement
- Do not fill gaps in the evidence with a convenient founder myth
- Keep the original customer problem visible as the business expands

> The source material explicitly says it does not identify a specific business mistake by Flynn.



07

Five Lessons To Keep

The useful lesson is not that a blog becomes a company. It is how the first offer became possible.

1. Start with a problem you have already spent time understanding. Flynn's LEED material existed before the product.

2. Make the first offer clear and limited. An 89-page study guide was easier to explain than a complete education business.

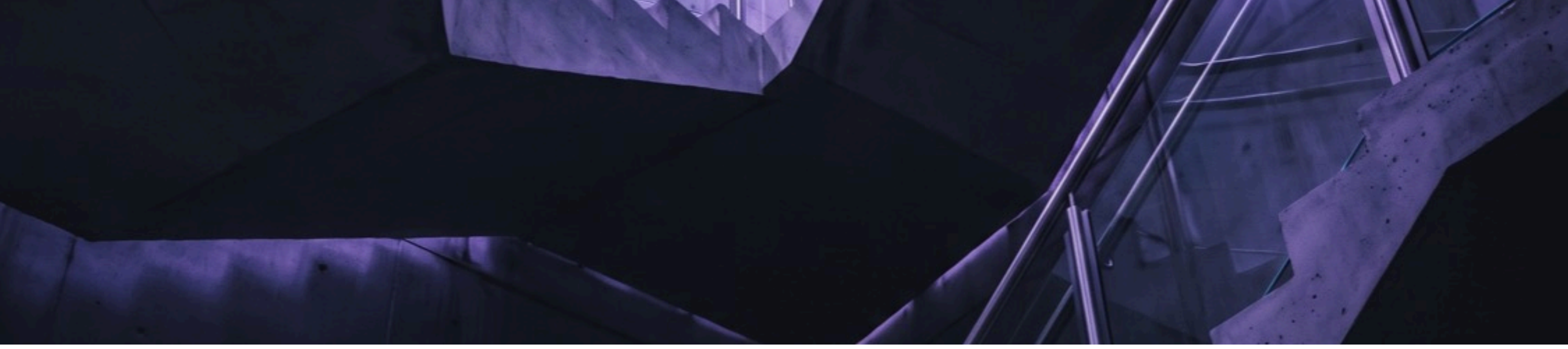
3. Use free content to demonstrate your thinking. People could see the work before deciding whether the paid material was relevant.

4. Expand only after the core offer has evidence behind it. New formats and revenue streams came after the initial product.

5. Separate evidence from storytelling. Self-reported sales figures can be useful, but they are not guarantees or benchmarks for someone else's business.

- Your current work may already contain the beginning of an offer.
- A small, specific product can teach you more than a large unfinished platform.
- The first customer is also feedback about the problem and the explanation.

> The lessons are interpretations of the documented story, not promises about outcomes.



08

How To Start The Model Today

The modern version would begin with the same question: what do people need help understanding now?

Choose a narrow problem connected to work, study, or a repeated task you know well. Write down what people currently ask, where they get stuck, and what a useful first result would look like.

Publish a small set of practical examples. Do not build a full course or membership before you know whether the explanation helps. Invite readers to reply, ask questions, or describe what remains unclear.

Then package one focused offer: a guide, template, workshop, audit, or small tool. Give it a specific promise without promising a specific financial or life outcome. Charge for the structure, time saved, or access to your method.

Use a simple website, an email list, and one distribution channel at first. Review actual questions and sales conversations before adding a podcast, community, software product, or second offer.

The first step today could be less ambitious: write the outline of the guide you wish you had when you were learning the problem. Then find out whether anyone else needs it.

- One audience
- One problem
- One small paid offer
- One public place to publish
- One feedback loop

> This is a present-day adaptation of the model, not a claim that the original results can be repeated.

09

Tools And Resources

The tools matter less than the order in which you use them.

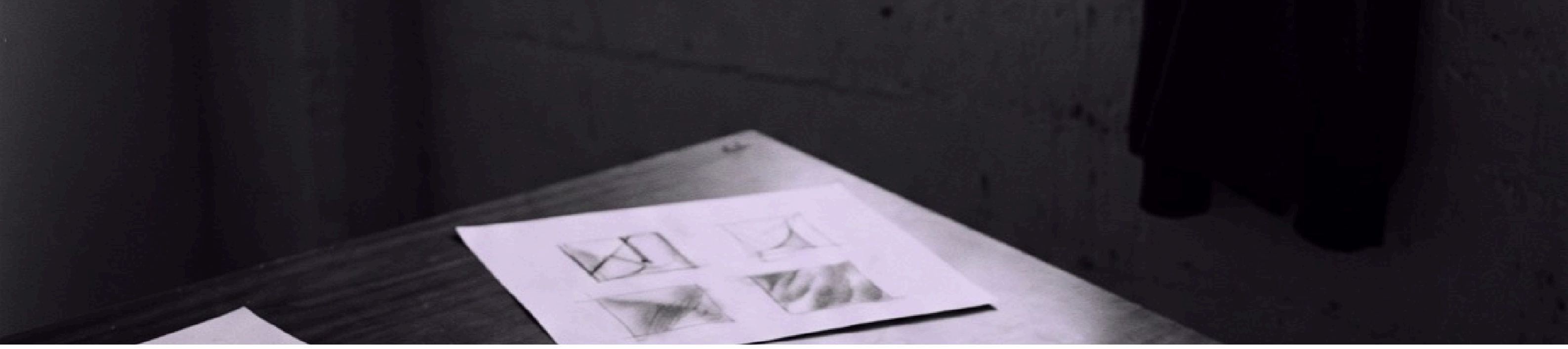
For research and drafting, use a notes system, a document editor, and a simple way to record recurring questions. The goal is to collect evidence and language from real problems, not to accumulate software.

For publishing, a basic website or blog is enough to explain the problem, show useful examples, and describe the first offer. An email tool can help you keep in contact with people who choose to hear from you.

For selling, use a payment processor and a delivery method appropriate to the product: a protected document, a course platform, a live session, or a small application. Keep the first technical setup reversible.

For measurement, track a few observable events: visits, email signups, replies, completed purchases, refunds, and repeated questions. Do not use vanity metrics as a substitute for evidence that the offer is useful.

For distribution, choose one channel where the people with the problem already spend time. A blog, podcast, video channel, newsletter, or professional community can work as the starting point. The material does not identify one required tool.



10

Tools And Resources (2)

- Notes and document editor for research
- Website or blog for public teaching
- Email platform for follow-up
- Payment and delivery system for the offer
- Basic analytics for observable behaviour
- One distribution channel

> No affiliate recommendation is included. These are tool categories and operating resources, not endorsements.

Sources & transparency

Every figure in this document comes with its source. Anything the person only stated about themselves is marked as self-reported.

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- Flynn published The LEED AP Exam Walkthrough in October 2008. — October 2008 [SELF-REPORTED] Geschäftsmodell-Analyse https://fourweekmba.com/pat-flynn-business-model/
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- The study guide sold 309 copies during its first month. — 309 copies [SELF-REPORTED] Geschäftsmodell-Analyse https://fourweekmba.com/pat-flynn-business-model/
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