A Brief History of Website Platforms and the Possible Future

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When you have a membership site builder like 10XPRO, lots of things become possible. Hear what James has in mind for his business moving forward.

James Schramko and John Lint

James: James Schramko here, this is episode 896 of SuperFastBusiness.com. And today, I brought along my special repeat guest, John Lint. Good to have you.

John: Thank you for having me, James.

James: Always get you. I wanted to get you involved in this conversation. I've had some things I've been deciding for my own business. And as coincidentally, it comes up a lot with my own students. And as part of my decision-making process, when I make big decisions, I take my time about them. You know, like my grandparents said, you know, Sleep on it.

I've been mulling ideas over and thinking about stuff and going through all the usual decision-making processes my way. And I see this also with my students. They're coming up against similar decisions. And I just wanted to talk about what the decision-making process is like, and what options are out there, why I'm doing what I'm doing.

And just to get your sort of validation on it from your perspective as an expert in this topic, and we're talking about the topic of platforms. You're a familiar guest on the show, we've had you back a million times. You actually are by far the most often, repeated guest on this show, like, you've got the most segments.

"You've got to SURROUND YOURSELF with people who have STRONG OPINIONS, who MAY NOT ALWAYS AGREE with you."

James Schramko

My audience love you. The discussions we have are often very vibrant. Sometimes, I've got to rein you in, other times, you're just - so it's fun, always fun. I love the fact, and this is a really important point, you've got to surround yourself with people who have strong opinions, who may not always agree with you. And for me, you're one of those people I can always rely on to just say what you think.

And I know you're passionate. And that's part of the character, that's very appealing. And I think the users of your platform, 10XPRO.io, they really resonate with that. So keep being you. I love the fact that you're real. That's why people listen to this show, as well, because we often talk about real stuff, we're not talking about imaginary things. But this is real.

From Dreamweaver to WordPress

I'm at a junction, you know, and just to give a bit of backstory, when I had a job, I was learning about command line, I had an extreme struggle building a website, I knew I wanted to be online, I didn't know what I wanted to sell. I knew I could sell, and I knew I had marketing ability. But I had no ability to code or tech or whatever. I am pragmatic, I can work with my hands. And I can play around with things without reading the instruction manual.

But anyway, my backstory really is that I struggled so much with it, and I bit off more than I could chew. I bought some software back then. It was called Dreamweaver. And I was lost. I had no idea how to use it. I ended up giving up on it. There was really only two main platforms - there was Dreamweaver, and there was Front Page. And there was also, very, very early WYSIWYG.

John: Super early.

James: Super early WYSIWYG platforms like, What You See Is What You Get. Some of them were online, but they were pretty clunky. And they had no features, like none. You couldn't change anything. And I stumbled across this software, it was called XSitePro. And what it did, it was kind of combination of, it kind of made it easy for you to make the site but you still had some tech stuff. You had to put in your details of the server, and you had to push it up to the website.

So anyway, a bit of a struggle. But eventually that got me up there. And I was so excited about it. I made a demo site with it. And I started promoting this to other people because I was just so excited that I could make it work. And I sold a lot of it. That was my first success, was selling website software. So I've been in the website software game since 2005.

Now, eventually, I got so good at it, I was selling a lot of it and selling the bonus around it and then provided a website service helping people, and then along came this big bad boy called WordPress. And it started to eat into this market, because my software was really only able to be used on a Windows computer. You had to be pretty hands-on.

And now, WordPress was up and running. And then people were selling these websites, WordPress, and it sort of took over. It became the dominant platform. A huge chunk of websites on the internet are WordPress, and it's really common. The current version at the time of recording this of SuperFastBusiness is a WordPress website.

Most people online are faced with choices. So let's talk about this. On the product sale side of it, this is a whole other thing. Initially, I used platforms like Clickbank and then I got some software called DLGuard and then I got an Easy Member Pro. And then I got eMember, and then I got BBBulletin, and then I had Nanacast, and then I had ThriveCart and then I got Xenforo. So just a little timeline from like, 2005 to now.

So I'm at this point where I feel like the way that I've been using my forum has been really effective. And it still works. But I know that things have moved on. Now there's a whole bunch of software programs that are, I'm going to say, they're either really good at the front, or they're really good at the back. So I've basically told you the story of the two halves of my business, the front and the back.

John: Sure, sure.

The advent of the page/funnel builders

James: So these days, there's strong front end contender, there's page builders out there that do funnels and you're just one funnel away from success and all that stuff. But quite often, they're not that good at the back end. And some of them do cart functions, some of them don't. There's some programs that build themselves as being pretty good at the back end, like, have your own community and stuff. But they don't really do the front end or the billing that well.

And that's where you sort of came into the picture for me, you came along to the Maldives, you sat beside me, you had a look at how I'm running my business, you modeled your platform from where it was, and from my understanding is, as an agency back in the day, you created this tool to be able to build out funnels for the campaigns you're running and to have all the ability to do things that the original tools couldn't do, all the split testing and evergreen webinars and deadline funnels and all these types of features and viral shares and so forth, and that it works on mobile phones.

But also, you had to deliver, you got to deliver courses and memberships and stuff. And so you actually took a lot of what I was doing with the memberships and built that in. So I'm at this point now, John, where I want to build a new site. And this is where my clients get to as well. They're like, What platform should I use?

And I'm saying, Well, it really depends what you're trying to do. But if you want, oh, there's a whole other thing, I've ended up having my own team of web developers, because we have to keep this thing up and running, we have to do hosting, we have to do virus protection, plugins, updates, backups, there's a lot that goes into it. I mean, I have full-timers who do this. And you either have to have that or a service if you're going to manage your own website.

This is the vision…

Now this option is where I'm at, is I'm going for simplicity, I want to streamline my business a bit, I want to get it more updated and modern. So I want to get a 10XPRO installation for a new website that I'm building.

And it's going to have, the front end is easy, because I can just go and click on the campaign builder, I can bring across my book funnels, I can bring across my challenge funnel, I can put a webinar if I want, I probably won't initially, but I might later. I definitely want to upgrade to the app version, because I know it's essential for people to be able to access my products via their mobile phone. And I want them to have the little icon that they can access it through, which in your case, it'll be called Academy.

And I want the back end. I want them to be able to buy the thing on the app, or on the website, I shouldn't say on the app, because Apple will come out and want to charge me extra. I want them to be able to go to my front end funnel, make it through to where they can pay. And then I want them to be able to have the back product delivered.

In my case, I'm thinking I want to have a little group of people who we get on a call every week, and they'll pay a monthly rate and they'll get private forum coaching. It'll be exactly like SuperFastBusiness intensive. But I think I want it on this new platform. And I'll also get a little social wall, which will be like a Facebook group or whatever. But it's in my own world.

And I want to have playbooks. It'll be short little, like PDFs or videos, just like a searchable register of things that I can share, like my cart abandonment sequence or the email sequence I would recommend people send to sell people in the back end, those sort of things that I'm constantly referring to.

So basically, I want to cherry pick the best of my best stuff. I want to put it on this new site. Technically, this is where I want to just verify with you. Is it as simple as me choosing the domain, pointing it to the coordinates that you give me for my account, which I'll play with you if you could set me up with an account. That will be amazing. We'll do a case study about it.

And then, once that's done, you install the site for me. So I don't need my web team to do that. It's all done.

John: And that's done. Yeah.

James: And then once it's there, I can just access it through my admin portal. And then I can start choosing which campaigns I want. And I can create whatever product or membership I want in the backend. I can plug in my Stripe and or PayPal details. I can activate the app with the code that says, Yes, you can use that. And I also just plug in my Ontraport account, because I'll need to plug in an email account that it's going to deeply integrate with.

And from then on, basically, I just fill in the words, and then I can style it however I want. I can either use the preset templates, which I probably will out of the box. And then later on, we might just make it look and feel consistent with our other sites, which I understand is quite customizable.

John: Yeah, absolutely. You can change any page you want and customize things. Yeah, for sure.

James: So from then on, basically, we just have one monthly fee, and then you'll manage all of the updates, upgrades. Keep it live, check it for viruses, back it up and all that stuff as if I would have my own team.

John: All that stuff. Yeah.

James: Yeah. That's a dream. It really is a dream. So that's really where we're at. And I've seen the whole evolution, I've seen the evolution of when it was very, very hard to build a website to now, where you can pay. Now one thing is, I think the monthly fee for 10XPRO is still cheaper than, well, firstly, I pay $1,000 a month to host SuperFastBusiness. So that's a big benefit.

That alone is more expensive. But generally, if you take into account the cost of having some team member or a service to update and manage your site, plus all the, I have to pay an individual license at the moment for stuff, these are considerations. I had a couple of other considerations my team raised that I wanted to run past you, because it's probably going to come up with tech savvy people.

One is, if we have special things we need to do like add records to the SPF or MX records or whatever, are those things administrationally able to be done?

John: Yeah, absolutely. So this is something that we would do as well for free. So you just send us an email or use the live chat option that's available as every member can use. And you just tell us, Hey, I need these. You're talking about DNS records, for those who are listening.

James: Yeah, because I think we use some, you know, if I want to use that domain name to send emails and stuff, they like it to be demarked, whatever.

John: Yeah, and we do this all the time, we do this all the time. We do it for free, like I said, usually it takes a few minutes to do. So by the time you send a request, maybe a few hours later, then everything will be done. And we just basically make sure that we manage all the DNS records for you, like, that everything's taken care of.

And the reason we do this is because we're using CloudFlare, which is the biggest solution online to make sure your site is protected. There's a built-in firewall, built in DDoS Protection, which is basically attacks, cyber attacks. So that's why we do it. And then we make sure that we take care of that. And it gets done super fast.

So you don't have to worry about it. Basically, we are here as kind of like a concierge desk. And you just tell us what you need. And that's it.

Make the switch and still own the racecourse?

James: Cool. The other question they had, this is my own team, I'm actually really proud of them for saying this, because obviously they process all the conversations we have. And they said, Boss, what about OwnTheRacecourse? Because we have a lot of control at the moment, or perceived control. We have our own WordPress site, and we have our own forum. And you know, it's pretty controlled.

Now, fair enough. If Amazon crashes, we're out. We're gone. We are responsible for our own backups and stuff. Now, I said to them this, and this is where I want you to tell me if this is accurate, because my clients asked me this too. And I know we've done a whole episode on this. So I don't want to go deep on it. I just want to, just surface level cover this off.

I said this: we're going to have our own content on Apple, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, like, that's on their platforms anyway. So obviously, we'll probably have the raw videos of that sitting somewhere in our Dropbox or Google Drive folder. So let's say, the site, for whatever reason, let's say there's a nuclear strike on the service center. And it wasn't backed up, like the worst case scenario, this is what I would still have.

I'd still have a copy of my CSV file of my Ontraport leads that we back up separately. And I can even put it on a local hard drive. So I still got my email list, which is probably the most important thing. I still have control of my domain name. So I can point it anywhere else I want. I could point it to a Wix site tomorrow. And rebuild it. Hey, we've sent you an email, let me know if you don't have it. Right?

John: Yeah, that's a super important point, because some people don't understand that. Whoever has purchased a domain name, you have access to it into what's called the domain registrar. And then you decide, hey, where do I want to point it to? So you are always in control. Because if you don't like, let's say, 10XPRO, or something happens, you can just say you know what, I want, like you said, I want Wix, you change your record, and boom, you're done. You're done.

So you're always in control. As long as you control your domain name, you are the master basically. And like you said, the second thing, your email list, extremely important as well. And the third thing you're about to say, probably, is your content, your videos, your raw files, and then you are in control.

James: That's it. I have my raw files. So even if I do my playbooks or whatever, I'm going to have videos and PDFs. The worst case scenario possibly is I might lose some of my text, or, you know, use a contributed content. And that's a possible thing. But heck, you know, I turned off a forum once about 2011 or 2012 or 2013. I turned off a forum that had four years of content and 250,000 posts. I turned it off, because we started a new one.

Less content, more personal presence

And the problem that I have now, and this is a problem people don't think about when they start out is, I've got way too much content. I've got trainings that are 10 years old, just sitting there, like event recording. I've got too much stuff, and I'm feeling this desire to clean up. I want to get it all up to date. And then you decide, do you want to renovate? Or do you want to start again?

I'm feeling like I'm ready to sort of start something new. So this is like, the first we're hearing about it on this show, Episode 896, this will be like the first sort of behind the scenes poke behind. But you know, I've been wrestling with it. The other things that come up, what do we do? Do we do it as a business? Do we do it as personal?

Now, I'm thinking I'm going to lean more into my personal name. Because I do have a good reputation online, I do see people with personal branding, whether it's Paris Hilton, or Grant Cardone or whatever, they can use that to direct it, they can direct it to investment funds, they can direct it to events, or whatever.

So I think I can run my brands, but in concert with a personal presence. And I also, just in that evolution I described, remember I said I went from this sort of Microsoft, build it on your computer thing to then a more global thing. And I went from technical and tactical to internet marketing niche.

My first podcast, by the way, was called Internet Marketing Speed, and it got rebranded as SuperFastBusiness. This podcast we're on used to be Internet Marketing Speed. I used to be internet-marketing-focused, but then I couldn't stand all the people in internet marketing who are bright-shiny-object driven, and I just backed away. Like one day, I just said, I'm never walking into the Warrior Forum again. I'm not doing WSOs and all that.

John: Seems we have the same story. Yes.

James: Right. Then I've went on to online business. But you know, some of the most popular episodes on the SuperFastBusiness have been like with Marisa Peer, in personal development, in mindset, in parenting, some of my health episodes. I want to teach more people how to work less and make more, and certainly the online business is the key to that; memberships, agency.

Still going to talk about that. But I really want to go one level up more general. And I'm excited about it. But I'm also excited to do a ground-up build on 10XPRO. I've done it twice before. I had one in a non-internet marketing niche, which you and I worked on. And it went great. Until I decided that I just can't stand that market anymore. And I had to leave it, because it was toxic.

John: Yeah, we have to leave the past behind at some point.

James: We have to. And this is a really important lesson at some point. You know, and I'm coaching people who are just making their first sales. And here I am with, I've got a fantastic machine. And I'm ready to make some changes, I'm ready to disrupt myself. This is a bit bold, and there is some risk. But there's also, I'm going to feel better about it. Whatever happens, I need to do this.

So I wanted to say thank you for always supporting me and providing the toolset that makes this an obvious choice.

John: Oh, thank you.

You can't do it without people

James: And thank you, on behalf of my customers, who have backed us. We've had people like Nils Vinje.

John: Yeah, amazing,

James: His episode, Zero to 100,000 Case Study was one of the most popular ones, and I want to bring more 10XPRO users to the market. I want to share and celebrate people who go with us. This thing we have, it's a great partnership, you've got the tool and you deal with all the developers and you have the vision on how to make it work. You tell me how to use it better than the way I would have used it. You're always on hand to help.

John: And you tell me how to make it better.

James: I tell you things that would help me do what I'm trying to do with it.

John: Yeah, that's cool. That's cool.

James: So we do work well together. And we have come up with lots and lots of innovations. And you also tell me when I'm asking for something that I shouldn't be asking. You tell me, Well actually, you should be doing it a different way. And that's really insightful. And then some of the things I ask for, you look at and think, Well, that makes sense. We'll do that.

So, it's been great. And I'm looking forward to bringing in my users into the platform. I'm going to go and invite some of my best customers to come on board this program, and to thrash it and just tell us, you know, where can it go? What do they want it to be able to do? And I want to pave the way for all of our other 10XPRO community members, and I also want to be a role model for people who feel like they're at that early phase.

I'm literally going to start fresh accounts. And I'm going to start this thing from zero, so that I can actually demonstrate what's possible from a standing start. Even though I've got a fair bit of experience, I'm still going to have to roll up the sleeves. So looking forward to the challenge. Maybe it's because I just watched four series of Undercover Billionaire, but I'm really motivated right now. And I think it's going to be a fun journey.

John: Yeah, that's going to be cool.

James: Bottom line is, you've got the tool that is doing the front end and the back end, and my team are actually quite excited about being able to focus on other things. They're going to be focusing more on getting our content out there. And all the other things other than the technical under the hood stuff, which your team is going to handle from now on, which is great.

John: That's our job. Yes, for sure.

James: Thank you.

John: So leave it with us and I look forward to see what we can do together. It's very exciting. And I think you're onto something. And yeah, if we can be part of the journey and help you a little bit, then I'll be very honored to do that. So that's awesome.

James: That's one thing I've learned from Undercover Billionaire, is that there's always a team. It's not a solo sport. I'm surrounded by the most talented people, my partners are talented partners, and I want to showcase my partners from the best possible platform. And let's see what we can do.

This is episode 896. It may be a historical episode. It's either the one where we made a brave call that panned out awesome, or the one where I took a slight deviation and it didn't work out great, but I'll wear it, whatever happens.

John: That's cool. No problem.

James: Thanks, John.

John: Thanks, man.

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