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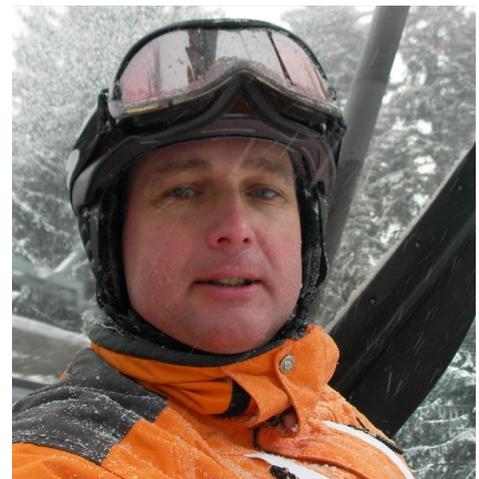
Lance Nelson Had A 20-Year Career In Finance, Quit His Job To Start A Blog About A Ski Resort In Bulgaria, It Became His Full Time Income Source, And Today He Skis And Blogs For A Living

Hello, this is Yaro Starak and welcome to what will be a very entertaining Entrepreneur's Journey Podcast for you.

I'm going to introduce my guest in a moment. We'll hear all about his story about how he started a blog about a ski slope which went on to be the foundation for a 60,000 Euros a year business.

He lives currently in Bulgaria where he skis 30 days of the year and basically lives a life all around the aspect of skiing. As you can imagine, it's a great life.

The reason I want to talk to you now though is Lance, the subject of my interview coming up is actually a Blog Mastermind Graduate. He is one of the people who really impressed me because not only did he follow through





and build a blog doing what I teach inside my Blog Mastermind Course, and really going through and implementing everything that I talked about in there.

He did it even when results weren't really that significant. After 12 months, he only had 50 people coming to his site but, he saw little signs of improvement, little things that encouraged him so, he kept at it and as you will hear in this interview, he went on to build what is now a thriving business and allowed him to quit his job working in the banking sector which he have been doing for about 20 years.

So, he certainly started this transition away from full time employment into running his own business, what you might call, "late." He's not exactly in his 20s like you hear a lot of other entrepreneurs so, this is something you can do. You can do it in a small niche. You can do it a little bit later in your life and it can allow you to leave your job and go and live on the slopes running a blog. It's an amazing transformation that can impact your life like that.

The reason I'm here though is to invite you after or before or whatever you're inspired to take a look at also being like Lance and going through my Blog Mastermind program.

If you are interested in taking some aspect of your life that you're interested in, that you're passionate about and turning it into an income stream through the vehicle of blogging and having your own online business, I'd invite you to go to www.blogmastermind.com/signup. That's the current page where you'll find out where the next enrolment for **Blog Mastermind** is or you may be able to enroll right now when you're listening to this.

Once again, that website address is www.blogmastermind.com/signup. You'll find all the information there about my Blog Mastermind Training program. I really look forward to working with you when you join. That's it from me. Now, here comes the interview. Enjoy!

YARO: Hello, this is Yaro Starak and welcome to an Entrepreneur's Journey interview. Today, I have a person on the line with me who will definitely serve as an inspiration for anyone who thinks that their little niche passion is not a viable online business based on a blog because my guest,



Lance Nelson, who is originally from the UK but, now lives in Bulgaria, has translated, I'm sure would be a passion for skiing into a fairly thriving business all around essentially a ski slope called Bansko in Sophia, Bulgaria. I think I said all that correctly, right Lance?

LANCE: Nearly correctly, Yaro.

YARO: Oh darn [*laughs*].

LANCE: Bansko is a ski resort some two hours away from Sophia in Bulgaria.

YARO: Not bad.

LANCE: Very good.

YARO: What I'm impressed, I was asking Lance before we started this interview, just first numbers to give people listening here sort of a picture of what's possible and what you've been doing.

Most recently, the numbers you gave me, you're making about 60,000 Euros from the entire business that's been derived around this [Bansko blog](#) and you are actually expanding quite extensively into apps, as well which we'll talk about later and you're doing it with comparatively quite a small amount of traffic, about 80,000 unique visitors a year, not a day or a month as some blogs get but, a year.

You're doing that with various different ways. You're monetizing your blog, all related to skiing in Bansko or going to this resort in Bansko. So, to me, I've never heard of Bansko before I met Lance. I'm really impressed to learn the different ways you've built a business around this.

If anyone here, as you're listening to this interview, you have an interest in, I don't know, it could be another skiing resort in this planet, it's obviously a great opportunity to follow in Lance's footsteps or I guess, any sort of niche hobby. You really can bring it down to something small but, let's learn how Lance has done this.



So, Lance, first of all, thank you for joining me on this interview.

LANCE: My pleasure, Yaro.

YARO: I'm also very excited to introduce Lance because he is a previous Blog Mastermind student. I love hearing success stories especially when they're in this really special unique niches like that so, Lance, can we go back in time first though.

You used to be a regular working Joe, is that right?

LANCE: That's absolutely right, Yaro. I was typical like many people. I was working in a bank, in corporate banking, asset finance. No young spring chicken for me. I have been doing it for some 20 years before going full time on the blog.

Yes, the corporate world was for me but, I just knew I had to get out of it.

YARO: You had no prior businesses of your own before or during that career?

LANCE: No.

YARO: Awesome. So, you basically have been a steady corporate employee from high school to University to getting a job and then, going down that career path.

LANCE: Absolutely right, from University after University, went into a division of National Westminster Bank, Royal Bank of Scotland... I was there for 10 years and then, moved to a few other places including GE Capital, EMC finance and more laterally, Barclays. So, yes, a corporate boy and now, out of the corporate world, thankfully.

YARO: Yes, that's no doubt going to be inspiring for anyone who's had a career ready and might be feeling it's a young man or a young woman's game only to start an online business. Let's show them what's possible, Lance.



Now, you're sitting in your corporate job. Are you hating it or are you just sort of exploring opportunities, seeing what's going on online. Obviously, you were exposed to the .COM boom and the second .COM boom that might be said that's going on now. How interested were you in this?

LANCE: I think I have always quite enjoyed the technology side when I was at University. I spent a year out in IBM. I have been exposed to technology.

I always felt that the corporate world didn't give me complete creativity. Obviously, it's different working for someone else as well so, you got that piece to consider and so, I was up for something that I could really express myself, great escape of expression you can get in the corporate world.

I'll be honest, if you wanted people sitting behind your desk on the evening after a hard slogan like I need, I know how that feels. I know the frustration sometimes... Unless you're making it to the top, that's great but, perhaps if you're not going to make it to the top and you're in the middle management lair, you're kind of thinking what else you could do? Then, and if you've got the passion that you can certainly write about then, hopefully, this interview will prove that you can do it.

YARO: So, was writing your thing? I'm assuming, at some point, "Okay, let's stop dreaming about leaving this job and start building something that potentially could lead to it happening."

Did you look at all range of opportunities from blogging to YouTube to doing Affiliate marketing, starting an e-commerce store like what brought you into your own business space first?

LANCE: I think I started with what I was actually interested in. I said, first job, I thought well, blogging will be a way of talking about stuff I'm interested in namely my ski thing.

I thought, well, if I go down another path then, I'm going to always struggle to make the content. As for the direct affiliate route, I just didn't quite connect with that, to be fair.



For some reason, I really can't remember why. I just felt blogging is getting pretty big going about five or six years ago and I could see that that was a route to doing something... Something good may come from that.

YARO: So, what did you do to try and make this a reality?

LANCE: Well, first thing, I bought your course. I realized having, very quickly, I was on the right track, I need to do something that I really want to do. I had in mind a complete career change. I remember at this stage, I was working for an employer. So, it was necessary to have something that didn't require too much effort.

I'm not an actual writer. I don't have any particular gift. I have never done it in any previous job other than the email like anybody else. The people out there listening to this and think you have to be some copywriter or some journalist, I certainly do not come in to that category.

That's really how I started thinking of something I'm really interested in, thinking it might give me a lifestyle change which was what I was really after.

Then, I picked up on, we've been going to Bansko for a few years, enjoyed the skiing, got a property there, and that's how it all started.

YARO: I'm surprised and impressed that you picked up my course as the first thing you did. That's really amazing. Is this a case of you just going, "Okay, look at my life. Bansko and skiing is something I love." Like you said, you bought a property there so, you're going to be spending regular or repeat time there. You're learning a lot about the place. That makes sense for me to be my first attempt at building a blog and just to see how it goes.

Did you just sort of install Wordpress, get yourself a domain name and then, just start producing content?

LANCE: Pretty much, Yaro, yes. I did feel it was the right route. Obviously, I was doing research, generally on how the story could go in terms of a blogging story.



I think one of the... you started off the interview talking about people and maybe after huge traffic and appealing to a huge audience around the world, yes, for sure, this content on my site is appealing for people not necessarily coming to the country in the ski resort.

But, in the main, it is a very much focused thing I'm doing and it does enable you to immerse yourself and become the expert in something quite narrow i.e. a place.

I kind of felt it was a reasonable strategy. To be fair, I had my doubts because it is a long process. I was doubting the wisdom of my approach. For sure, probably after 12 months of doing it and not really going for any income at that stage.

It was actually a time when I came over to really decide enough of the corporate world. I had a little break and see how it goes. I started probably monetizing the blog then when I was having the result full time and so, that's when I started to think, "Yes, this could be interesting."

YARO: I have to say, if you were on the coaching calls with me and you said you started a blog about a specific ski resort, I might have said, you've potentially niched that too narrow. I would have said, "Maybe, let's go for Bulgaria or maybe let's go for all of Western or Eastern Europe," or something like that because selling tickets to various resources across a few countries as opposed to one specific resort seems very, very narrow.

But, hey, you proved me wrong in a lot of ways there. Before we move on, you mentioned 12 months there of working on this blog. You had your full time job before you decided to, I assume, take a break and live off savings since the blog wasn't covering your costs yet but, that 12 months, were you just going home after work and writing one article every second day? What was your initial process to build the basic platform of your blog?

LANCE: Yes. It was pretty much that way, Yaro. I can't quite recall how frequent the articles were. They possibly were one every three days on average. I still struggle. I get off and go through a couple of weeks to produce content and I think you may have even talked about being in the flow for it. Sometimes, you got to do it when you feel like it and then,



perhaps not do it when you don't. I think your audience will forgive you for that.

It's better to have quality rather than just quantity was my view. So, yes, in a nutshell, the answer to your question is yes. Do it after as and knowing that it's about getting the long-tail search words, mindful of all the SEO considerations and getting that down.

YARO: Can you tell us what sort of things you targeted like did you pick specific Sophia ski packages? Did you find these phrases and then, write an article specifically to match that? How strategic was this versus just generally rambling about this love of skiing you have? In a way, you've got such a niche site that your SEO competition, I'm presuming, isn't that significant because it is so narrow a niche which is in many ways brilliant because you can probably have a successful blog with not a ton of content.

You just have to be consistent enough to become the authority. You're not going to have sophisticated competition which is the benefit of going narrow. So, I'm guessing, correct me if I'm wrong, did you just pick, okay, there's these 20 articles I need to get written about the core things, like restaurants, night life, ski hire, getting there, where do you live... Those things and once you've written articles about all of those, the traffic started coming in already, is that what happened?

LANCE: Yes, you're largely correct although, rather bizarrely, there was more competition than you'd expect. This in part was because it was a new resort. Quite a few people moved there because there was a property boom going on. There were a couple of other sites producing content as well and there were some people who were battling to get keywords in the hospitality industry part of it so, the hotels and apartments.

Rather strangely, it can be a bit more competitive than you think. So, yes, it is niche but, there's always competition. There's always other websites and in this particular resort, whilst it's not a huge resort in terms of domain. It had a big following and it has a big following. It gets, I believe about 600,000 skis or visitors there every ski season.



There was competition. That's what I'm saying. I had to keep at it to move up the rankings.

YARO: Okay, so what did you write about during that first twelve months and what did your traffic look like at the end of it?

LANCE: Obviously, you start from zero and it's like every milestone. You think, "God, I can't believe if I manage to get five people a day." You just keep trotting along and then, I was amazed I was getting 30 people a day. Wow, unbelievable.

But, that took about three to four months to get to that stage. Then, after a year, I seem to recall I was getting about 50 a day. It's a very seasonal business so, it depends what time of year I'm talking about.

Then, we fast forward to where we are now. I did some strategic things like put a live webcam and another one is going to go up, as well, my own live web cam to help drive traffic to the blog. Then, that can be up to 2,000 people a day when there's a big snowfall happening.

Yes, you're right. The sort of content, how to book, ski lessons, and obviously, giving links, restaurants, bars, cafes and all that sort of stuff. I wrote a guide which still to this day is just being expanded upon and drives people to an email list.

As per your instructions, Yaro, really. I followed...

YARO: Good student.

LANCE: ... to the letter. It's great. So that one guide for what? This one small place and a place that many people couldn't put a pen on a map. It's probably been downloaded by about 6,000 people now, at least.

So, it's a good strategy for people to follow in their niche, I think, to get a guide done and that helped... So, to answer your question, I'm rambling a little bit just to say, the progress was slow initially but, I kept at it until it started moving.



YARO: Yes, I have to say though, at the end of twelve months, you've got 50 visitors a day then, you decided to leave your job and move to Bansko for a while to keep working on it, everyone around you must have thought you were nuts after putting a year into it and not really making any money, I presume by then. You had a lot of faith, didn't you in this, Lance?

LANCE: Yes. I think I did. There's a section of the population who, we can be quite, perhaps a little bit stubborn but, just think if we just keep doing it, we'll get there and we'll find out more.

It was a leap of faith, I think, to quite a large extent but, when you start getting some progress, when you start getting, and I started to be fair thinking, jogging my memory now, I started to because I had a property there so, I was actually getting some rentals from my property because I was promoting that. So, that was a nice little bit of extra income.

So, there was a little bit of encouragement happening after about seven or eight months, I seem to recall, of doing this.

YARO: That's sort of the time frame when I started feeling encouragement, too. I think I remember feeling after six months that I'm not sure this is going anywhere. What am I doing? Maybe, I should stop.

Then, seven or eight, you start seeing a bit of affiliate income in my case and I'm like, "Okay, I just need to increase the numbers and increase the income channels and this can work."

Let's progress forward. You built a platform and you've got your 50 visitors a day, not a lot but, it's a very small niche and you've built your newsletter with that guide, that free report you give away, which is The Essential Guide to, (I assume) Skiing in Bansko?

LANCE: Yes.

YARO: I'm assuming you didn't do too many, I don't know how to call these things, like going out, in the **Blog Profits Blueprint**, I'd call you building communication channels. Did you go out there and bring people back to



this blog or was it just because you were writing articles and getting good rankings in Google?

LANCE: There is a forum that certainly at that time was quite popular and I did participate in that for the first two to eighteen months. I did drop it because I felt, I was very careful how I put it, no self-promotion or all the good guidelines that, just contribute as much goodness as I could.

Yes, I was doing a little bit of that, getting my name out but, nonetheless, I was focusing on getting the content out because content is king. People need to see something or read something and I realize I kind of had a voice for a certain section of people that were enjoying it because the good news was, there's a saying here in Bulgaria, "You can't eat, thanks." Nonetheless, you are encouraged when you get a few nice emails. That keeps you going. That's worth. That's like a currency, I think.

YARO: So, predominantly, it's just Google traffic and a bit of time in the forum over eighteen months and that's what built your ground roots traffic.

LANCE: That's correct, yes.

YARO: Okay, well take us through the second year and beyond. So, you moved to Bansko and then, did you do anything, I guess, more significant at that point since you were on the mountain, it's obviously easier to produce content about the place when you're there. Can you give us some highlights for the certain moments where you suddenly got a traffic increase because you did something or suddenly made a good chunk of money because you did something.

LANCE: Basically, what I did is took a camera up in the mountain with me and stuck it at my face and gave people a live snow report. I would video myself saying, "Here's the snow. Here's the weather. Here's the forecast."

I am very interested in weather, one of my passions as being flying, paragliding flying. I have been kind of studying weather patterns for that sport for many years now.



I'd give my little view on what the weather is likely to be and any snowfall that's likely to be due and pan around and show the skiing, a one- or two-minute video.

YARO: Everyday?

LANCE: At that time, I was doing it, I probably did it every other day. That really did have a great impact. And so, some of these videos, actually funny, particularly if I got a guest person as well, I'd occasionally find someone who could also do it but, we generally get 300 or 400 views for these videos and these days, on a good day, we get 1,000, almost within two days of doing the video.

YARO: You put that on YouTube and put that on the blog and that was it.

LANCE: That was it along with the commentary, yes. There would be some words to go with this. I think that was a turning point, looking back. That really gave it a boost and gave me some confidence that, "Hey, I have got an audience here. They are interacting with me now and they are making comments a bit on the blog." So, I was encouraged at that stage.

YARO: Did you look to start at making more money at that point? What happened next?

LANCE: I did. I felt well, never waste a time to try and think what's the best way and the obvious way was to do the ski packages. I'd found a very reliable local guy who has a number of shops in the town and good locations for the ski hire lessons. I just did that ski hire lessons and that brought in, yes, not a huge income but it brought in an income so, that was encouraging.

I did have, it wasn't enough. I still was probably dipping into savings at this stage.

YARO: Just before you tell us more about other income streams, I am curious of the ski packages and it's someone local. From a technological standpoint, how did that work? Did you need to track your referrals or did you sell them directly from your website? How did it happen?



LANCE: I sell them directly through my website. They will go and in those days, it was Excel spreadsheet, fill in exactly what they wanted and then, from there, they'd make payment and everything else would be sorted, their lift from the airport to their ski hire lessons.

YARO: How did that work? They paid you with Paypal and then, you called your friend down in the village and said, "Hey, we're just going to order," is that...?

LANCE: Well, yes. Well, not too far off. It was all done via email. They'd fill out a form. There'd be Excel spreadsheets of the bookings and they'd know that they paid. It turned out and it still is a great system and almost unique and that you can just rock out, show your form and be in and out of your, trying on your skis and fitted literally within a couple of minutes, it's a very sleek system indeed.

Interestingly enough, it's sleek because it's not computerized within the shop because many shops do have computers. They're busy scanning things and creates bottlenecks. It's a really cool system to process a lot of people for a ski hire within a very short space of time for this pre-booking method.

YARO: I'm on your site right now and if I click that fairly large ski packages icon you've got in the right side bar, that opens up a form that I can fill in which then goes on to ask me about ski and snowboard hire lessons, lift passes and transfers.

At the end of that, will I just end up making payment? Money will go to you and then, you'll send the email down to everyone related to delivering those services and I would get a printout that I would just take with me when I land and get to Bansko? I would just show all the various people this and they'd check that everything was confirmed and away I go. Is that pretty much how it works?

LANCE: Yes, give or take. Yes, the transfer, it just was all booked up and you would need not to show a piece of paper but, yes. People would print everything off. These are notes they print off and a new form which is I've



developed, I think it's going to be totally unique in the world, it's a sort of custom ski hire booking form where you can log in and log back in. So, it's particularly good for groups.

You can imagine if you're booking lift passes for a week for a group of twelve people, their money adds up so, these are quite high-value sales per sale.

YARO: How did you arrange this with the various service providers? Did you just find out their fee or ask them to give you a wholesale fee and then, you tagged on your own percentage on top of that?

LANCE: Yes, I asked for discounts of what they would charge for just turning up and then, took my fee from that. As I say, I just work solely with one provider who is a wonderful guy. He trusted me so, I have a lot to thank him for because this was a rather unusual case of the agent taking all the money and then, passing it on later. We've worked together for five years now and it still works brilliant.

YARO: Amazing. Yes, great idea for any travel blogger out there who's looking for something to sell on their website like just find services that other travelers would want to buy and arrange certain deals and sell directly. It's simple but, effective idea.

You said it wasn't enough to live off initially though. So, what happened next? Did you add some more income streams?

LANCE: Yes, well, actually, at that stage, one reason or another, I decided to go back to the UK and see what happens. Now, much to my complete amazement, I did get full time employment for a year and that was with Barclays.

YARO: Was your belief a little bit shaky then? [*Laughs*]

LANCE: Yes. It was a very interesting time because obviously, the crash had happened in 2008 and I was their first recruit really and having been out of it for a little while, I was very pleased to get back in, I guess in some respects. But then, pretty much immediately, I realized perhaps, I should



have just sweated it out for a bit longer and stayed in Bulgaria. But no, I went back to full-time employment and got the blog going.

What happened was that I just sort of had time to improve it, build up the traffic, do all the good stuff of producing content and when the ski season happened, it went very well even though I wasn't there. Obviously, I was in full-time employment in the UK.

A year later, I just felt, well, this is going fine. This is a fine income. I've got no doubts. There's not a problem and I can live up for this even if it doesn't really grow very much from here but yet, I can have a much, much better lifestyle. I don't have to be commuting. I don't have to be answerable to someone over time and the usual stuff you guess in a big bank.

So, and then, I decided, yes. I think this is fine. I'll go full time with it and that's when it really started to happen.

YARO: That was the third year of running your blog?

LANCE: Yes, that's correct.

YARO: So, you went back to Bulgaria. You quit your job for the last and final time?

LANCE: That's right. Yes.

YARO: And, you said, you're making enough. Was it just pretty much from the ski packages that you were selling off the site?

LANCE: Yes, pretty much then, it was. It was a good few thousand Euros coming in from the advertising as well which was great but, yes, mainly though the packages. Your tip to listeners was to think about things that you can resell in a resort or in your niche.

I'm a great fan of that and to try and keep your own site as clean as possible as well with not too many ads either. So, that felt the right thing and to target the right customer that I wanted to target.



YARO: What were those ads you said? What are they? Like you said, there's not many on your site but, you said you made some money from advertising. Is it just the banners or...?

LANCE: Yes, banners, also in the newsletter, they'd get a link that I'd mention there and also sponsored articles as well which I still do. I put a full disclosure if it's a paid for article. That's great for all parties, really. I feel I've built up a degree of trust anywhere with people and places that I feel offer something I'm going to enjoy. Usually, I've experienced it before anyhow so, it's quite an easy review for me to do. That's almost like the fun part for me, getting paid to have a nice meal. And, free meal and then, money afterwards--

YARO: Can you just break down all your income streams? (Sorry, I cut you off there, Lance.)

LANCE: No, that's fine. So, there's paid for reviews, there's obviously the direct sales we've been talking about in terms of the ski packages. There's the banner ads both top of article banner and side 125 banners and there's email links as well, newsletters and also now, there's a whole listings technology we've got that runs into the app that gives me income as well from various places.

I often combine these together into a package, I hasten to add. That's been going very well, just collecting through the app which I got involved with whatever two years ago and we may come into that in a moment but, those are the main income streams that were coming in.

More of it will come in the future. I can sell other products. The form can be adapted to sell, I don't know, skiddo experiences or whatever. Another income stream I had last year that went very well was to do an offline map. I found an artist to hand draw the town and the piece map and so, I got this printed up, sold the advertising, and that served the purpose to advertise my blog and the app as well as produce a nice little income for the effort of doing that.

So, the app is --



YARO: Very, very creative.

LANCE: Yes, so kind of like you've got this app map and blog sort of free thing going on which I now feel would be quite hard for anybody to replicate.

YARO: I was going to say you must be famous in Bansko.

LANCE: [*Laughs*] Well, yes. People do know me including the owner of the resort. I work independently there and I work with everybody. I believe I built up a good reputation for integrity and keeping things to myself. That's very important if you're doing a very small niche like this is to be seen to be trustworthy because people know you're going to be talking to their competitors and stuff. This is very important.

YARO: Okay, now one thing we haven't talked about which I know people will be interested in the technology here before we move on to the app as well you can just the website, the Excel form you're talking about, now, you're a corporate banker guy and you said you're interested in technology but, I'm assuming when you started all this and as things progressed, your skill set is not web design, blog set up, setting up scripts, doing all that. So, do you have help with all these?

LANCE: Yes, I do. In fact, whilst I felt I could probably work out how to do it all myself to a basic level, I did actually pay. Actually, one of your past students, I believe, and I've just forgotten his name, forgive me, but he does Wordpress sites--

YARO: Joe, was it?

LANCE: Joe, that's it.

YARO: Blog Tech guy.

LANCE: Blog Tech guy. Yes, it's on the tip of my tongue, thanks very much.



He did a great job. That just got it up and running and subsequent to them, when I've gone through some tweaks and last year, I did a new theme on the site, I got someone else to do all that stuff for me.

So, yes. I'm not a programmer. I'm not someone who I trust myself to start trying to do all these different elements. So, I think that's important for people to realize you do not have to be from the IT world to make this happen.

YARO: Do you remember how much you paid at the very, very beginning just to get started?

LANCE: Gosh, I think not a lot. This site was up and running for, let's say, if you put it in dollars, about \$300 or \$400 let's say, certainly under \$500, no more than that. The whole thing was done up and running, looking pretty much the way I wanted it. It was running up from [Thesis theme](#) and it was very simple for me just to play around with where I would put the video, the sign up form, all the bits that people learn on your course, really, to be honest.

YARO: Okay, and you did it, control that yourself using the Thesis theme?

LANCE: Yes, that's right. The Wordpress back office is I think, most people can probably get their way around that quite easily and will find it very conducive to adding the content.

YARO: What about your newsletter? What did you use for that?

LANCE: I use [Aweber](#), again, through your recommendation, and still do actually, and that has an incredibly high success rate for getting through to people and depending on the content, I get unbelievable click through rates. They can be as high as 100%.

YARO: Wow, I'm jealous.

LANCE: It's just, typically it's not. It's 15%, 20% but, that's still quite pleasing frankly. So, it's quite a clean list. People unsubscribe when they



have had enough, don't want to come back to the resort again, for whatever reason, that's served me very well.

So, it's up and down a little bit in terms of the numbers. As the season ends, people knock off it and then, new people come on and it's gradually been growing over the years so, again, my advice would be to set up that email responder as soon as you really start.

YARO: Okay so, Wordpress with the Thesis theme, Joe from BlogTechguy.com was your initial tech support person and Aweber for your newsletter. That's probably it. Does that sum up your technology?

LANCE: That sums it up. That's all that was required.

YARO: Fantastic. Now, I'm assuming you also have Twitter and Facebook and you obviously do YouTube videos. All these is running off Banskoblog.com. I'd like to talk about the app. Just before we do that, because I'm kind of wrapping up the whole blog process here, I am really curious and this is purely a self-indulgent question, taking Blog Mastermind, my course, what was it from that that helped you the most, you think, especially looking back now, after four or five years?

LANCE: Good question. I honestly think the biggest thing was obviously going through the stages, the technical stuff that one had to go through but, also it's the motivation and without motivation, nothing happens.

If I may pass your compliment back is that you do that very well within the program and you're not promising instant millions. It's all believable and it's all credible and it does work.

I think people need to, people are realistic, can go on the course and be sure that this is sound advice. I just look back that if there's one key thing, it's producing that content and with a mind that the tips that you give in terms of the keyword, the right tags, and these sort of stuff but, mainly, to keep up that content and to have your own voice and you'll find people you will connect with and have faith.



YARO: Okay now, one thing I haven't mentioned with is Lance and I actually connected through well, initially a comment he left on one of my articles on EJ which led to me finding out that Lance is now doing apps. He's done one for the Bansko blog which I had a look at.

I'm actually working with him currently to get one done for my own blog EJ. So Lance, can you tell us how did the whole app thing even come into your world with the blog?

LANCE: There were some good fortune really through a friend of mine. I was introduced to a program, it's like an Entrepreneur's program here and he wanted me to be a mentor for blogging on the topic of blogging. So, a bunch of young entrepreneurs who were getting information. They asked me to talk about blogging and on that course, I met, in fact, two people I still deal with regularly. One of which is now my business partner.

He instantly thought that we should work together and he was right. We very quickly progressed things and certainly within a year, we'd established the fact that we're going to produce more and more apps together, start up with local ones. Now, we've actually launched in the app store 25.

The business is really ramped up particularly this year where 18 have gone through, 19 through this year, I think. Things are now really following ahead on that side as I completely got immersed into the world of apps and how they can transform I think all sorts of businesses but, certainly transformed mine when mine went live in February 2012.

Did that answer your question?

YARO: Yes, sorry [*laughs*]. I was kind of curious with the, (drink break there. I thought you were having a drink, Lance), the app, I'm kind of curious with the beginning, before you've been approached by this partner who can produce apps, the idea is okay. I'm going to replicate all my blog content into an app form and see if that also, I guess, does the same thing that my blog does. It helps me sell skiing packages. It helps me sell advertising and it does it all in the app format instead of the blog format. Was that your thinking with the whole motivation behind having an app?



LANCE: Yes, basically, I was pretty certain that everyone was going to be accessing content mobile increasingly as more people got hold of these smartphones.

My strategy was going to be a long-term one to produce an app that was definitely low key and focused on providing free information, free to download, free information, not overtly selling you so much but, providing the stuff that people really want to know about which is the videos, the skis, the live webcam, the blog, all that, snow depth, all that sort of good stuff. And, I've been really, really, very much impressed, not just how an app for a resort can do but, also how it can do for other businesses as well.

YARO: How did the app go? I'm curious not having had my app go out. Did you just publish it and then, it starts getting downloaded immediately or did you have to email your list and put a blog article up and tell people there's an app available? How does that all work?

LANCE: Yes, there is a whole pre-launch process. Once you do, which we talked about it before, I didn't do that. I did a soft launch. We got it agreed and it went through first time with Apple which was great and so, I could double, double check it. I was cautious and then, went bang!

Put out the emails, all the social media stuff and obviously did stuff on the website. It very, very quickly got the reviews, got the traction, and this is absolutely key for an app. It has to be useful for people and if it's useful for people, they will reward you with good comment. That's a virtuous cycle for anyone who is publishing an app because it puts you in number one, as people increase, you need to search within the app in [Google Play Store](#) and they download your app because they see reviews, positive reviews.

Again, that puts you ahead of any potential competition. So, it's a really amazing time, I think for businesses to get their app out and get a head start.

YARO: Does it make you money at the moment?

LANCE: Yes, it does actually. I'd say it's breaking even now. I guess it's not making money but, it's still an investment cycle because over the last four



or five months, we're adding some really nice features to the app but what has enabled this is that the advertisers of the bars and restaurants, they've got a direct search within the app so people can see where places are. They can see the menu, the venues can actually have control over with the information that's in their listing.

It definitely helps, as I say, often with a bigger, the five star hotels we've got here, the Kempinski and the Premier. We package this up into a whole blog sponsorship deal every year for them.

So, yes, it makes money and it drives the conversion rate to your newsletter sign up. It's really fantastic in the app. You have a button that has an e-book cover or e-guide cover. People can't help but, press that and put in their details. I think it's something that people should do. It makes money but, be prepared for not instant return. It's a bit like starting a new blog in some respects but, the great news is you've got the content there. So, yes. I think it's a no-brainer for people to do this.

YARO: It's another channel for your existing content. So, like you said, once you've created it, then it's a no-brainer.

I'm actually, while you've been talking here, I've been looking at some property in Bansko. I'm really quite curious and Jesus! They're cheap apartments like 15,000 Euros to get yourself an apartment in Bansko. So, I can see the appeal.

Lance, you have a blog, you have an app, you got all these different income streams, you have a tech person helping you obviously, your partner now in the apps business. You're making around 60,000 euros a year which clearly, in Bulgaria, is well and truly enough judging by the pricing of the property and you don't have to work a full time job anymore. So, what's left? What are you shooting for now?

LANCE: Well, as they say, you shoot for the sun and if you get the moon and that would be great. I'm shooting very high now. I may have mentioned to you on our discussion earlier, Yaro we've got a big contract we're about to sign. Well, we're acting as more the backend people putting together all



sorts of apps in a few other industries apart from blogging that will mean real volume at the right price. And, we're very, very excited about that.

We're looking at producing a lot more income through the joint venture business and about continuing to develop the niche of Bansko blog and the app that goes with it. But, the app business, I see, is a fast track growth.

My tip is if people want to do a niche, it can lead to other things and I think that's important to remember.

YARO: Yes, which leads me to my final question for you, Lance. Going back to the beginning, especially giving your, I'm not going to call it a slow start, I think it was potentially a slow start, slow enough that most people probably wouldn't have continued, like the fact that you have reached the point you have really is a testament to how much faith you had and were willing to just keep doing the work and seeing a little bit of success and using that as enough to motivate you to keep going.

What's your advice for the people out there who in particular, if they are thinking, I've got a niche like this, I've got like my favorite place like camping, or I'm just really into this obscure form of mountain bike riding and I'm thinking I'd love to have to blog about that but, they're just not sure if it's going to be the foundation for a business.

What would you tell them? What would you suggest they do in particular?

LANCE: Okay, so the first part of the question is what would I tell them? I'd say, now, I think if you look all around us, we see marketing has changed. Everything used to be for the average person, the mass market. I don't think any of us really want to feel that way anymore and obviously, companies have become a lot smarter and putting us into niches and appealing to that niche. We pay for that extra value. The world is full of niche customers if you like. Don't feel you have to do something general and mass but find a niche and find your voice for that niche.

Your second part really was how should you go about it? If you're looking at the resort, then I'm very happy to receive an email from anyone thinking of setting something up similar to what I'm doing because there is big



opportunity there I think and we've got a platform that can help you do that particularly with regard to the app and the other thing is the content will, if you write it well and you produce good visuals, as well, you need good photographs, will bring you an audience and you will get on the front page of Google.

But, you do have to stick at it. I'm kind of just being realistic with people. Are you up for a bit of hard work? If you are then, keep up that work. I know it can be difficult after coming back from work and sitting down on the computer that maybe if you've got some time on the train or something like that then, they can give you a chance to write, write some content. But, most of all, pick something you actually feel really comfortable writing about.

Can you imagine yourself still being able to write about it in a few years' time? That's my tip.

YARO: Couldn't have said it better myself. I think you just quoted one of my articles there.

LANCE: [*Laughs*] [unclear].

YARO: No, it wasn't. Lance, the email address for you for anyone who does want to take advantage of that, thinking of starting a ski resort blog and app? How do they get in touch with you?

LANCE: Well, they can contact me at Lance@banskoblog.com and alternatively, I've got lance@factory.bg if people are more interested in the app side of things and that's it. They very well can contact me and I can pass on anything I can to try and help them get going in this niche.

YARO: Okay. Banskoblog.com and it's the resort of Bansko if you want to find it. That's, like I said, put it on the map for me. Never heard of it before this. So, thank you Lance. Anything else you want to add before we wrap it up?



LANCE: That's all. Just to say, thank you to Yaro for connecting us once again and getting in the app world and look forward to working with you on that.

YARO: I do, too. I'm looking forward to having an EJ app out there and seeing how well it does. So, we'll keep everyone updated of course on how that goes on my blog.

So, for the time being though, thank you Lance for sharing your story in such detail and good luck with the growth of the app business and of course, the blogging that continues to fill everything as well as a fairly good stable cash source which is impressive.

For anyone else listening in, if you are interested in getting more interviews like this and you want inspiration as well as very tactical and strategic advice on how to actually set up things like blogs and apps and anything to do with online business, you know where to go, my Entrepreneur's Journey blog has my podcast archive. You can also subscribe to this podcast in iTunes. I hope you've already done that. If not, go to that right now and you can find my blog and everything by googling my name which is YARO.

Thank you very much for listening. I'll catch you again on a future interview very soon. Bye!

There you have it. I hope you enjoyed that fantastic interview with Lance. As you can see, it is possible for you to start a blog while you're working a full time job and work on it during your off hours so, before work, after work, lunch breaks, while you're doing your commute and on weekends. It can be something that's a part time project which you slowly build up over time and then, through using various different income generation methods like many of which Lance talked about in this interview, you can build up enough income to eventually quit your job and like Lance, you could potentially move to another country where the standard of living is much better for your lifestyle or just travel to see new places, whatever the case might be, a blogging business grants you that freedom.



If you're interested in following in the footsteps of Lance, like him and taking my Blog Mastermind training course, I'd like to invite you to once again, take a look at the sign up page. It's at www.blogmastermind.com/signup. That's where you'll find all the information about the program as well as how you can enroll in the next running of the course.

My name is Yaro. I'm the teacher of that program and I'll be helping you to grow your own blog over at the course of that program. One more time, it's at www.blogmastermind.com/signup. That's it for me. Thanks again for listening. I'll talk to you soon.



Relevant Links Mentioned in this Interview

- [Bansko blog](#)
- [The Essential Guide to Bansko](#)
- [Blog Mastermind](#)
- [Blog Profits Blueprint](#)
- [Thesis theme](#)
- [Aweber](#)
- [Blog Tech Guy](#)
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