



## Want More Great Interviews Like This?

Visit [Entrepreneurs-Journey.com](http://Entrepreneurs-Journey.com) for articles, downloadable podcasts, videos and more to help you start an internet business...

[www.entrepreneurs-journey.com](http://www.entrepreneurs-journey.com)

## Michael Carruth: How A Return To A Childhood Passion For BMX Bikes Became An \$80,000 A Year Online Community

Hello, this is Yaro and welcome to the Entrepreneurs' Journey podcast. Today's guest is Michael Carruth.

**YARO:** Hello, this is Yaro Starak and welcome to an Entrepreneurs' Journey podcast. Today's guest on the line with me is Mike Carruth who came to me through a connection with my Blog Mastermind program. He's an original student from and by the look of things, a very, very first intake Mike.

But today Mike is in charge of a network of BMX sites which he's making a full time income from about \$80,000 a year which he's grown when he took over the sites. He acquired them from about \$45,000 to \$80,000 so we want to hear about how he makes money, how this whole story came about, how he grew the sites and how he took them over and Mike's actually got a very long background in the world of BMX.

He has given me a bit of a preamble to the interview. I know that at 14, he left school to become a BMX photographer and writer which sounds like a 14-year-old kid's dream to be honest, Mike.





**MICHAEL:** It was.

**YARO:** Thank you for joining me on the show.

**MICHAEL:** Thanks for having me Yaro. It's great to be here. I've been a long-time fan of the podcast and that's a dream come true, dream realized to be with you today.

**YARO:** Awesome. I got the summary right in terms of the sites that you are in charge of now and that's pretty much your main focus in terms of an online business, am I right?

**MICHAEL:** It is. The only thing I'll clarify is that when I took over the websites which started in the spring of 2008. I took the sites over at an income level of \$4500 a year and then, have grown it to \$80,000 at that time.

**YARO:** Okay, big difference.

**MICHAEL:** Well, you know. Not to toot my own horn or...

**YARO:** Oh yes.

**MICHAEL:** I just want to get the numbers right.

**YARO:** Very true.

**JOEL:** So yes, it's been a really great 7 years of doing it and just about 7 years now, and like you said I did start as a photographer and writer. First as a BMX racer from the age of 12, and then at 14 I got into the writing and photography aspect of it. I always really admired the magazines that were out at that time and just wanted to do that and want to model those guys. My mother was very encouraging and said, "Hey, then go for it. If you want to do it, do it." And, I did.



**YARO:** Yes, that's a pretty supportive parent I have to say. You know I have played video games at 14. I doubt I would have been allowed to drop out of school to pursue a professional video game career of any sort.

**MICHAEL:** Yes, no doubt.

**YARO:** I'd like to go back in time of course and learn in particular how you grew the income from these sites. It sounds like this is your case of really ticking all the boxes in the sense that you're making enough money that you are living off the websites but, you're doing it in the subject that you really have had a lifelong passion in and it's difficult to combine that.

Most people don't get to work with the subject they'd love and do it all the time and making enough money to live off. So, you've kind of ticked all those boxes and that's rare, so I think it will be great to explore how you got into that point. Can you take us back? You're 12 years old and you were racing BMXs, you got really involved with the community I assume and then, you tell your mom you want to leave school to like pursue this because you already had something going which you had like a job happening where you were getting paid to write or do photography?

**MICHAEL:** Yes. I was a freelancer. The magazines would pay me, pay my expenses and pay me a little bit of stipend a little bit on top of the expenses to go to the various races so, I was flying to places like Dayton, Ohio and Memphis and Oklahoma City and stuff like that at age 14 which you couldn't really do today but, I did and in some cases fly alone to those locations at 15,16 years old so it's kind of crazy to check in to a hotel and take a cab from the airport and stuff. I can't imagine my 15-year-old doing that today so, it's crazy. But yes.

And so, then I worked as a freelancer for a couple of years. I left school as I said, it was kind of in the way. I really was never very good in school and in fact, spent all of 8<sup>th</sup> grade in special education where they told me that, or I should tell my mother that I wasn't really a viable student and being a big strapping lad I should learn to work with my hands and get to be a manual labor type of career versus something off my head.

**YARO:** Ouch.



**MICHAEL:** Yes I know, it's tough to hear that.

**YARO:** Were they aware that you were actually getting paid to do something creative that wasn't manual labor?

**MICHAEL:** At that point, at the point when they said that, that was 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I wasn't quite in the business yet. I was aspiring to be there and in the summer of 1980 and early 1981 or thereabout, I started to write and to get published. And so, that's when it hit me that I could leave school where I really wasn't getting a lot of value anyway and do this full time. That led me in 1985 to getting a staff position at a magazine in Los Angeles and moving out there, and that was my career for the next few years.

So, in 1988, I know we're skipping over lots of chunks of years but, this was all spent in the BMX industry, the bicycle industry and that industry pretty much had a terrible downturn in 1988-1989 with the advent of video games and some of the things that we see today where kids are still... They are not riding bikes anymore today and that's a problem we'll talk about a little later. So, I got out of the industry at that point and started another business.

**YARO:** I think in 1988 would be when I was playing video games as a 9-year-old.

**MICHAEL:** See?

**YARO:** So, that makes complete sense. Nintendo, it's their fault.

**MICHAEL:** Yes.

**YARO:** Okay so, what happened next?

**MICHAEL:** So what happened next is that I did a little time working over at an ad agency in Taipei, Taiwan and started to learn a little about the advertising business. I was very interested in it because as a writer and photographer, I had at least 2 of the 3 skills to actually produce my own advertising for clients so, I didn't have the graphic designs skills at that point. I never was really a very good artist, I didn't have illustration skills or



even production skills to actually layout, the key line and paste as they did back then.

This was just as electronic production tools were coming in to us so I started to learn some of those very early production skills with QuarkXPress and Adobe Illustrator, actually, it was Pagemaker first for me as far as a page make up application.

So, those were some of the skills that I brought back to Chicago with me in 1991 and we started, a friend of mine and I, my friend was a sales guy and I was more of the creative side, we started an ad agency called The Creative Alliance. Today, we call it the Virtual Agency. We put together book of freelancers. We categorize them. We had these big binders on a shelf, and whenever we had a project come in, we poured through the binders and we'd put together a team and we attack the project.

That was very cool. It worked well for the time and then, not long after that we bought a computer which was a huge investment at the time and we started having these Saturday morning 10AM jam sessions where people would come in and everyone would teach what they know. No one knew everything at that point but everyone knew something. So we put together these little jam sessions and everyone taught what they knew for 20 minutes.

That led to a kind of they told to friends scenario happening and friends of those people would call us and say, "Hey when are doing your next Macintosh seminar?" Ultimately, in May of 1992 that led to the founding of a new company called Mac University where we actually took as a business to teach people how to do this.

That was the business that I ran for 10 years and then, we changed the name and changed the direction a little bit from Macintosh only into PC and some UNIX and stuff like that and that was... Digital Bootcamp was the name of that business.

So, we continued on to do that and became very successful in doing that type of training and I ultimately sold the business in 2007 and it's still



operating today and you know it was a great 15 years but I was ready to move on from training was the point and do something else.

**YARO:** Right. I was going to ask, if you left the business I'm assuming you had had enough as, I can imagine you might have after 15 years. Did you have a plan going forward after that or you're just going to see what happened next?

**MICHAEL:** Well, I had a book or a database if you will of ideas and I had been a domain name collector from 1996 on until today. I've always been very interested in domain names. I've bought and sold hundreds of them over the years and at any given time have maybe 200-300 in a portfolio so all of those domain names had an idea attached to them of course. I wanted to realize some of those ideas. But life, let's say faith took its turn then one day stumbled upon vintagebmx.com where all of the old guys that I used to hang out in the old days, all of the old bikes on display, and new people now were in the sport, and the people who were in it back in my day had gotten back into it with their kids now because they were in their mid-30s, mid-40s and so, all the kids were out at the track.

That sparked an addiction to posting on the forums and hauling out all the old pictures. It was really just great to be back among that group of friends from 20 years past.

**YARO:** It's funny how you become vintage as you get older, Mike.

**MICHAEL:** You know it, huh. Yes.

**YARO:** Yes. Okay so you find this site. You just used it as a user right and just participated in... How did the opportunity to become the owner arrive?

**MICHAEL:** Well you know as I've said I was searching for the next thing to do and I was starting to build out some early wire frames to step for a startup. One day I just had said to the owner of the site at the time, just in passing really, "Hey, if you're ever interested in selling the website let me know. I might be interested in buying it from you." Within two weeks from that day I drove to Phoenix, Arizona and I took over the site. That was March 12, 2008 and you know here I am today.



There was an opportunity a few months later to purchase another website called BMXnews.com which was a perfect domain name for me, I love that domain name. It has all the things you want out of a domain name.

It was a site. It was an up and running site at the time but it really didn't have a lot of traffic, or a lot of prestige behind it. I saw the opportunity to really remake that into the marquee, the lead site and said about it because my whole thing was in writing and shooting content and it was hard to do that as [vintageBMX](#). But, as BMXNews the opportunity to write and shoot and come up with cool story ideas was unlimited and I was 100% in it.

**YARO:** I can see, your background being a photographer and a writer, did you do want to own a content site, not sort of being restricted by maybe a form with the word vintage on it especially if you want to reach people who don't want the vintage aspect.

I'm curious about the taking over of both sites, you said when you initially acquired them, it was \$4500 a year in total revenue so I'm assuming the acquisition price would not been a ton of money that you could get a deal easily down there. Were you thinking I'm going to take this over and turn it to my full time income or is this like you know what I like this subject and I want to be in charge and I want the item?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, yes. It was more of the latter. I knew from days gone by you don't really make a huge income from the sport of BMX really and you really did it for the love of the game and if you could do it for the love of the game and also eke out an existence than you were doing really well. I didn't have any designs on setting the world on fire as far as revenue back then. But, I did have a vision.

Even from the time when I was 14, I always wanted to own a BMX magazine. That was the big thing back in the 80's was with magazines since there's no internet yet. So the opportunity to have a modern-day version of a magazine that was super exciting and the opportunity to use my business skills and the skills I had in training as well as my old days skills in writing and shooting, bringing all that together was definitely super exciting.



**YARO:** So what were the websites? I'm assuming there was a small membership, a little bit of ad revenue coming in that was the \$4500 a year. Was there an email list? What were you actually buying because people always find this interesting in the sense that how do you even determine how much you should pay for that kind of business or website for your business?

**MICHAEL:** I know and it's true. To me, it really was more of a gut feel thing. I did not really... if a business person were to ask you what are you buying? You would definitely not have a good business case to buy to spend that kind of money on a property like this. We had some serious traffic at that time you know, a million pages a month from all over the world. I definitely saw the opportunity there to speak to a larger audience which I definitely always wanted to do. And then also to get back into the sport as a major player and I definitely liked that idea. And I knew that I had a lot to offer because that kind of experience and that mix of talent was not present in the sport at the time so I was excited to bring that back.

**YARO:** Yes, well... if that's the massive opportunity certainly, you should be making more than four and a half thousand a year off that, though I can see there's some work to be done to make that happen. I'd love to talk about how you grew that. But before we do that, where does Blog Mastermind fit into this because you took my program but these aren't exactly blogs. I can see how they are content sites and a community so there's certainly some overlapping concept. So, where does it fit in to the picture?

**MICHAEL:** Well for me, one of the things that I... and I took, so, when Blog Mastermind came around, I joined it on June 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, I looked up the old email today, with the welcome to Blog Mastermind email and so, in the timeline here, that is like nine months or ten months before I actually acquired these websites and it was during the time where I was looking for what's next because I haven't sold digital boot camp yet. And what I took from it from really was one of the gems that really helped make it happen was one that was gleamed from Blog Mastermind.



You had said in one of the lessons, the most important variable when it comes to topic selection is whether you enjoy the subject and whether there's potential to make money from it.

So, to me a few months later when it came time to make this decision, those are two of the variables or two of the components. It was like, "Do I enjoy the subject?" Yes, I could definitely go full on, full tilt into this thing 12 hours a day and be stoked all the way.

Whether there's a potential to make money from it, looking at the revenue at the time, any sane person would say probably not but I also knew that there was a lot of untapped potential that was not being explored because the people who were running these sites prior to my acquisition of them were really doing it more as hobby and not as a business. So it wasn't really about the money for them or is it about the money to me today but it is more about it since it's a business today versus being just a hobby.

**YARO:** It's funny this subject matter because I'm not sure if you are aware, I purchased mini motorcycles forums as one of my investments.

**MICHAEL:** Really? I didn't know that.

**YARO:** It's just funny seeing that you happen to own two sites that have two forums about bicycles because I had two forums about mini motorcycles. That being said, I had nothing to do with that niche. I've never had a mini motorcycle. I wasn't interested in it. That was purely an investment strategy but that's another story. I've told it on my blog so if people want to hear that, head to Entrepreneurs-Journey.

Okay, so you took my program before this and I can see, I'm a little curious did you think about starting a blog at any point in time? Was that a part of it...?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, yes, yes I did. I had one for a while which was called the What If list and it's really during the time that I was going through the course and you know I had skipped over large chunks of it and then, came back later and dove back in. The way you had it laid out is very helpful to a guy like me who was running a business and had a family. It was an



epitome of an online education you know, at will kind of thing where I could come back and do it as I pleased.

And so, in that case I had the What-if list blog and I was writing a little bit about it but, as a journalist from days past, I really liked the idea of more a formal structure to things, more of an article structure versus the conversational blog structure and so, that was what really helped me along to start writing on the [BMX News](#) website.

**YARO:** I often do feel for the journalist who've grown up learning to write a certain style that just really doesn't gravitate to the people on the internet because people like that conversational tone and that's not journalistic writing so especially with a niche like BMX, well you could write journalistic but people are going to be much more interested in you being Mike in talking about your passion for it naturally. So, let's go forward with the growth of these sites. What exactly did you do to turn it from \$4500 to \$80,000 plus a year in income?

**MICHAEL:** Sure. It took a few years definitely and one of the first things that I did was to really just start applying a business structure to it so that the customer service was more on point. We had an organized plan where here's what you get when you buy an ad package.

I also took the step of taking out of a CPM or CPA ad model, that's not how we sell today. We started selling just based on tenancy, x amount of dollars a month, flat rate, non-metered and then, we just divide up the traffic by way of however many advertisers we have.

And so again, the ecosystem within which we operate is a very small mom and pop business ecosystem so, they are not used to hearing things like CPM and ten dollars a thousand or whatever the rate would be. We tried to make it more digestible for them.

The other thing that we did was to make it just one package and one money gets them all. One ad investment gets you your ad buttons and ad banners on all three websites so that it's network wide and you don't have to choose and then, at that point we offered two options as far as how you can buy in, just a quarterly option or an annual option. We don't do monthly



deals because it was a one man show and maybe with a virtual assistant every now and then. It's very difficult to baby sit a lot of 30, 40 accounts on a monthly basis. Credit cards decline and people drop off and stuff like that. So, we really don't have time to go in and resell the deal every month so the quarterly and annual deal really makes so much easier for all of us, for the advertiser and for me.

**YARO:** I'm curious, people always ask, how do you determine what to charge for advertising? How did you do it?

**MICHAEL:** Well, it started out as we call it the 333 which was 3 sites, 3 months for 300 bucks. And so, it was just \$1200 a year buy in if you will. Now the annual campaign is \$3600 for the year so it's still very, very approachable like normal business standards but, it's still hard for some of the advertisers in our niche to buy it out so, they did that for \$900 a quarter or for the \$3600 a year.

**YARO:** And how did you decide how many advertisers you could take, because obviously, the more you have the less impressions each one gets, right?

**MICHAEL:** Right, right, yes. We do sell out on occasions. It varies because the dynamic of traffic changed a lot over the past few years. Back in '08, '09, we didn't really have Facebook and Twitter as major players in our space but today, it is an important part of the ecosystem so it changed our traffic dramatically in terms of we are getting more visitors but fewer page views than we use to get.

So we're getting a little less on page views but more visitors so it changed the dynamic a little bit. We're still responding to that, we've got a major redesign coming this fall on all three websites so that's going to help a lot in terms of engagement.

**YARO:** Have you experimented with any other forms of monetization or was it just always been just displaying banners for a quarterly and annual fee?



**MICHAEL:** The other thing that we do is we've toyed a little bit with merchandising, you know, logo t-shirts and t-shirts of some of my photos from the races and stuff like that. So, that's definitely something with redesign we're going to do more of. We have a small membership on the forum website where people donate to help keep things rolling and that definitely helps. And then, I do freelance work for some of our advertisers as a consultant basis where I don't do work for outside companies like that aren't advertisers but within our little group. I will do things like write press releases and do special photo sessions and things of that nature.

**YARO:** Now, correct me if I'm wrong, this wasn't as simple as putting more banners on your site because you already have all this great traffic then suddenly the money doubled, tripled, quadrupled? Have you been proactively marketing the site to build the traffic further? What are the keys to make this massive improvement and bearing in mind, it's quite a number of years too that we are talking about.

**MICHAEL:** Yes, yes. I'm certain that I could have done better had I've been more aggressive on it. But I didn't want to be overly aggressive with commercialization because in our niche if you commercialize too much then you are going to see a huge backlash from the users.

So really, we didn't want to put... Right now, we have ads in certain places, but we've held off on doing ads like background wrappers and things like that that really, I don't want it to be a blinking Las Vegas Boulevard of ad creatives on there.

The other thing that we did, and I just want to mention is that, we also started selling sponsorships and special sections so like we have a, you know our Pro Mac top story is a branded top story that gets posted everyday. And so, one of our awesome parts manufacture is a sponsor of that and a company Dance Comp is our race coverage sponsor for the year, so they've come in and stepped up to be the race coverage sponsor and some others.

So yes you just try and see what happens. Some other things didn't work out, we tried to do an auction site where we put up an auction site and



thought maybe it would be awesome for people to be able to sell off their parts and that didn't work out at all.

**YARO:** A lot of similar ideas I had with the miniature motorcycle site. I was thinking I'll add a blog to it to provide content and not just a forum and I'll test selling some products using affiliate links and not just banner ads and selling directly to paying companies. And also, I was thinking yes, we need to find a way to get people buying and selling a bit more because I had some results for that with previous forum.

So it's funny how you try of all these things but the community ends up deciding what works like they really control it all don't they and you have to be careful like you said.

**MICHAEL:** Yes, absolutely. Yes.

**YARO:** Okay, so you have a third site, we haven't really mentioned yet. You do have a third site, which is... it's like a photography site? Is that what--

**MICHAEL:** Yes. It's called [photosareposted.com](http://photosareposted.com) and in BMX racing and it's important to note that we are BMX racing versus freestyle. BMX racing is an Olympic sport now. It was since the Beijing Olympics. They went also to the London Olympics and coming up for Rio. But in racing you have a, I'm sorry I lost my trail of thought where were we?

**YARO:** You were just saying you have your other website.

**MICHAEL:** Yes, oh so Photos Are Posted. So, in the racing space there's a term called motors are posted which they actually post all, what race or what heat race you as a rider are in. So, our site is Photos Are Posted. And so, when I go to twenty races a year all over the country and shoot photos and come back with 300-500 pictures per weekend and I post them up on the website and that is another one of those monetization opportunities that we tried but, ultimately didn't work the way we wanted so we just made it free for everybody. So I post the images. I put the logo on them and I put it in a very tasteful way down the lower left or lower right hand corner and people can freely use those images on social media or we publish them in



such a way that you can even make a small print out of them, all on us not for any additional funds.

**YARO:** I really like that because you're becoming a permanent part of the community psyche because all the social media with Facebook sharing the photos from the event, it's branded as from you so you'll be known as the leading site that each community goes to.

I think that's really important to retain the, not just obviously for the sake of the community and having the traffic and the audience but the advertisers want to be seen on the leading site and that is an important part. It's a concept of pre-eminence which I talked about in my other coaching program quite a lot, where you do get to do things like charge more for advertising and get the lion's share of the advertising budgets just because you are the main player in the space.

Even if you're not getting a ton of clicks, the advertiser wants to be in the head of the conversation that BMX user has when they think about going to buy something and they will remember seeing the logos and the banners on your site. You're triggering my memory because I did this with my very first website actually, my Magic the Gathering website and same model. We covered card game news. We had a forum, we had paying advertisers and I knew they just want to be where the community was, that's the most important thing. It's probably the case for you too, right?

**MICHAEL:** No question about it, yes it is. And, one of the other things we've done to build up that value because again, our advertisers they're mom and pop company, we really have to prove value to them on an ongoing basis. And so, one of the other things that we've done aside from that is, the way that BMX racing is structured is that there are teams and so, each of our advertisers has riders who ride their jersey or their apparel what have you.

And so, at the end of each race, I go through my photo set and I tag every single one of our advertisers in my photo set, in adobe light room and I export out a dedicated photo archive for each of those advertisers. I put together a list of all the names of each of our advertiser and then upload those images to our FTP site and on Monday morning or Tuesday morning,



send out a dedicated archive for each advertiser so they can pull down their images on an easy basis. They don't have to wade through about 600 images; it's all delivered for you, as part of that program. It's not an additional charge. That's just part of the service.

**YARO:** That's a greater value ad. That's fantastic and you can tag the names of the writers on Facebook and things like that too, right?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, yes we absolutely could. And so, what they do with that then is they'll take those images and they will put them up on Facebook, they'll use them on Twitter and put them on their own websites. They'll tag them and stuff and our logo still remains on there. The other thing that also includes is high resolution images so if they want to use those on print ads and trade show displays or things like that.

Granted, it's sort of an unorthodox way as a photographer, it's kind of unorthodox way to treat my images because I definitely have gotten flagged before for deluding, making it too cheap for people. But again, this is where we are today. People don't like to pay for images. We're no longer in a day and age where people will pay \$500, \$600, \$700 or \$1000 for an image so you might as well just accept that and make it work for you which I have.

**YARO:** Yes and you're a perfect example. You've created a platform where your photographs help you to make money not directly but indirectly the part of the whole process. It's a great example for anyone who's a creative that you do need to own some sort of an asset now that's around the community that the community wants to participate in that has some sort of commercialization aspect, whether it's selling products or selling advertising or both.

And I don't think the media is how you make the money anymore. It's how you get the attention and how you participate in the community. It's up to you then to find clever ways to make money from all of these and obviously you're doing a great job with these relationships with advertisers. So, Mike I'd like to know where are you going next with this? Obviously, it's a fairly small niche the way you talk about it. Is there room for you to grow and what are your plans?



**MICHAEL:** I think there is room for us to grow and there is room for us to grow by the sport growing. So we do have, we've got a little bit of a bump when I say we, the sport of BMX racing as a whole, have gotten a nice bump or a little bit of a bump off the Olympics or being part of the Olympics. Although the type of racing that occurs at the Olympics is much different, more extreme than the kind of racing that will happen at your local track. But as BMX racing rises then, that tide will lift all boats and so one of the things we're going to do this summer is to develop a beginner BMX racing one on one micro site. That will be a separate website and that will cater exclusively to getting in to the sport. Here's how to get into it. Now, the sanctioning body who is the governing body of BMX racing in North America, USA BMX, they do a great job of that as well but I think that this is one of those times or one of those aspects that a chorus of people need to come to the table and offer that content.

**YARO:** Awesome. Yes at least there's a future there. Now just before I wrap up, Mike. I'm sort of curious to see how you technically set this up like the actual picture of how your company runs. You're a mostly one person show right? Do you do the technology? These sites, are they Wordpress with a forum plug in or what are they running on?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, so as far as the structure, I am here in Chicago and I'm sort of the ring master if you will. I do have contributors, guest blog posters, people who go out and cover events for me on occasion. And so, I probably have four or five contributors at this time and then, on the forum site I have three amazing moderators who help and keep the community in line because I mean it's good now but, definitely at first have the tendency to cascade off the rails sometimes, people just running into a room and yelling fire kind of thing and so, we have volunteer moderators on the forum site.

So on the forum side of vintagebmx.com site is run off of [Invision Power Board](#) and I found that that is the best forum for what I like to do. Obviously, [phpBB](#) is out there too but Invision is a commercial product that is supported by operating business so things like support and update and stuff happens very quickly and very solid.



BMX News is on Wordpress and we're developing, as I said, a design for the interface this summer so it will stay on Wordpress but, just with more modern hooks to the social media and video and stuff like that.

**YARO:** I'm glad to hear that blogging is a part of this after you took my course in some way, if you're just using Wordpress.

**MICHAEL:** Yes. Well you know, if nothing else to the listener what I would like to push forth on that is that Blog Mastermind, yes, it may not be strictly blogging, but the discipline of writing every day, posting every day, the publicity that you outlined in the course, and all the stuff you spent the time to develop in the course is dead on important and super applicable to anybody who is running any ongoing business. Yes, you may have to adapt that to your own ends but you know there's great content and great lessons in there for sure.

**YARO:** I guess, if you're running a content site it doesn't matter whether it's a blog or a news site, like your site you might call it a blog magazine with BMX News. You've got contributors, I did want to ask were any of those people you mentioned paid or are they all on a volunteer basis?

**MICHAEL:** No, our contributors some are paid and some are just volunteer contributors. Others like, if I send someone out to cover and they have to get on an airplane and go and cover a race, take pictures and actually be responsible for posting those images by a certain time each night, with the level of responsibility comes the pay.

If you're just wanting to send in an article once in a while, that's awesome and we'll definitely make you part of the masthead and then, when those jobs that are paying come about I know that I can turn to those specific people to execute those assignments.

**YARO:** Fantastic! Yes, so you basically are running a magazine like you always wanted to or a blog magazine what I would call it nowadays but, they are the new version of the magazine, aren't they?

**MICHAEL:** Yes.



**YARO:** You publish regular content. You're doing coverage. You got a team of contributors, but mostly you're in-charge and you've built a community around that and then make money testing different ways. That's kind of like the nutshell story, right?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, it's sort of the nutshell story. Absolutely, and I you know, as far as what's next the other just, you know, just to piggy back on that a little bit, I don't, you know exactly which is the exciting part. It's nice to have the strategy of what's next and stuff and that's why again we are doing those site redesigns. We are adding in additional engagement points for users whether it's merchandising or we have a new feature which, well, I will also spin-off as to a separate non-BMX type of website next year called *Phototorial* and it is a way to create more editorial specific photo slide shows, you know the slide shows that you have in Wordpress now are just a photo with a little strip of a caption. It's not quite enough so a *Phototorial* will be much more robust presentation for that so it's exciting.

**YARO:** Awesome. All right, Mike. Last question for you and this is really for our listeners. There's going to be people hearing this story who are thinking, well, I love, you know, let's say sailing or I love some sort of you know, wood carvings or you know this or maybe not a competitive sport but it's not the big sport, it's Curling. Good old curling.

**MICHAEL:** Curling is always used. Yes, curling is always universal.

**YARO:** I love curling.

**MICHAEL:** It's the universal example.

**YARO:** I wonder if there are any forum communities out there about curling like BMX that has... There must be, don't you think? It's a pretty big sport. But anyway...

**MICHAEL:** I'm sure they make millions. I'm sure they make millions.

**YARO:** Who knows? But, whatever the case is there's people listening who have these passions and I think, for me, listening to your story, ok it's not a multi-million dollar company maybe they'll get there, maybe it won't but the



important part is you are really immersed in the subject that you'd care about for most of your life now and making living from it. You get to do everything around it, explore ideas just around this subject.

So, for a lot of people that's more important than getting tons of money doing something you don't care about if you can do both. I'm curious to hear your advice for that person who's thinking, "Ok, I love this subject. I want to have a site, a community, a forum, a new site with content writers and I want to make enough money. I want to make that eighty to a hundred thousand dollars a year from this business and the thinking like maybe I could buy one like Mike's done or I'd start one from scratch," but whatever the case is, it's 2014 so they're going to have to do different things to meet what you did in 2007. What would you say to someone who's, either one, going to start getting from scratch or considering buying, what's the most important things they have to get right in order to reach the point where you are?

**MICHAEL:** Well, If they have the luxury of being able to buy an existing site that has traffic already and a reputation in the community then hands down, that's the preferable path and still there's a lot that has to go into doing the right things beyond that but as far as starting from scratch, you know, you just have to totally dive in and be at the events like so, and you know if you were starting a sailing website, you would need to be at those sailing events and you need to be hobnobbing with those people that are the movers and shakers of the industry.

I had a little bit of a leg-up because I was known from my career early twenty-five years ago. So, my name was still out there as someone who's a media person from back then but you know, if you come in totally cold like you're a total unknown, you're starting it totally from scratch, you're going to have to have a lot of patience and a lot of perseverance to push through the setbacks and there's going to be...

I'm a big fan of Zig Ziglar and there was a time where a story he told that talked about a specific type of tree where they have to water it, and water it, and water it, and water it for years and years on end and then no, no sign of life whatsoever but then one day, boom!



It pushes through the soil and then it just, it grows twelve feet or something like that in a small amount of time and that's a great analogy to how this should you know, this should probably work for someone like that because they have to put a time on the calendar that says, "I'm going to dedicate two or three years to this and then, I'm going to get up every day and then I'm going to just run at it as fast and as hard as I can," and if you can't do that then, that's fine but you just need to have more of a patience for your extended timeline.

**YARO:** Do you think there's anything current that's really, really important in a sense that you should be spending a lot of time on Facebook now? And obviously each subject matter is probably different where the community hangs out but, especially for today you know, if you want to make the right choices and not spend time doing the things that won't work. Do you see any areas that exhilarate the results now that you should focus on, any platforms or techniques?

**MICHAEL:** You know here's the thing with Facebook is that it's kind of come full circle in a sense that for a little while it was coming up in the world and then, you started to build these big fan bases and then they throttled back on the reach and so, now, you know, you don't really if you have 20,000 Facebook followers or whatever or fans, you're not going get the reach that you used to get so you have to spend money on boosting, on boosting posts if you really want that out there and so, again...

**YARO:** So do you think it's maybe having a blog and actually writing a magazine is the best first step like controlling your content and spending your time there and then just seeing which of the external platforms end up working best for you?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, and also just taking a lesson from Blog Mastermind again, the publicity module that you had in there of guest posting and reaching out to media and things of that nature were, this is no secret but just the ability to become an authority on yacht racing or curling or BMX racing or what have you to start to make some of those in roads and to growing the links and in growing your ability to reach to a broader audience because the community sites are great but one of the things that I have found and I actually implemented is that I don't allow other websites to come on my



forum and try and suck off traffic. I assume that's the way that a lot of other forum masters do it, right?

**YARO:** Well, I mean possibly.

**MICHAEL:** Did you? When you ran your forum, did you run it that way?

**YARO:** You mean go to other forums or stop other forums?

**MICHAEL:** Stop other forums like stop other people from saying, "Hey, I just started this new website. Come check it out."

**YARO:** You know like you, when I ran forums there were such small niches. There just wasn't a lot of people trying to compete you know, that way. Magic definitely not I had. There was no other Australian sites and that was very early days and with miniature motorcycles you know what they might have been but I didn't moderate it. It was really a passive investment sort of site for me so, the moderators were looking at that. And, I don't know. Maybe they were having other sites trying to take some of the traffic away. I think if you are contributing to one community and linking to your own site, that is okay as long as you're there to contribute to the community but if you're just saying, "Come visit my site," that's just spamming like comment spamming, right? That shouldn't be allowed. Yes.

**MICHAEL:** Right, so again I'm definitely first in line to take the new version if you come out with it. I think it's going to be amazing, and all the new techniques, and the new trends and contents that you're going to be coming up with. You're doing it right?

**YARO:** Yes I am. There's so many different ways to run a business. I like hearing a story like yours and it might not be the quickest way. Well, it is a quick way if you can find a community that you can buy. That's probably the quickest way ever to have something up and running. But then, starting it from scratch can take a long time to build the community and sometimes it is quicker to go and find a product you can sell straight away but there's all kind different kind of ways to skin the cat and that is what this podcast is about, if hearing different sorts of stories. I shouldn't talk about cats. There's a cat staring at me right now. That was the wrong analogy to use.



But Mike, I got to wrap up because we got more interviews to get to so I want to thank you for coming on my show and telling your story. What are the sites that people can check out especially if they are interested in BMX, for sure they want to check out what you're doing right?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, yes, no doubt. Especially in Australia like you are, we have two of the top champions, Sam Willoughby from Adelaide. He is the Olympic seven medalist from London and Caroline Buchanan, the current world champion for the women. She's from Canberra.

So BMXNews.com and also vintagebmx.com, and VintageBMX is a forum site that covers freestyle and racing and pretty much everything to do with BMX of any era so, if you were a BMX rider in the 80's or the 70's, definitely stop by because there's going to be a lot of great stuff out there for you

**YARO:** Yes, and check out Mike's sites too just to see him running his community, where the ads are, how things run. So if you want to set up your own community based site, make a living from it, this is one of the examples you can follow. So Mike, thank you.

**MICHAEL:** Yaro, I'd like to thank you and keep up the great work with the podcast and all the courses. I'll be definitely watching and listening more.

**YARO:** Great! I appreciate it Mike. Good luck with the growth of the BMX network as well and yes, thank you.

And, to all the listeners, thanks for listening in guys up to this point in the interview. This has been another Entrepreneurs' Journey podcast, my name is Yaro. You can find all the show notes and all the other episodes on my book content just by goggling my name which is, YARO. Thanks again and I'll talk to you again on a future episode. Goodbye!



## Relevant Links Mentioned in this Interview

- [VintageBMX.com](http://VintageBMX.com)
- [BMXNews.com](http://BMXNews.com)
- [Invision Power Board](http://Invision Power Board)
- [phpBB](http://phpBB)

## Where to Find Michael Online

- [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com)
- [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com)

### **Want More Great Interviews Like This?**

Visit [Entrepreneurs-Journey.com](http://Entrepreneurs-Journey.com) for articles, downloadable podcasts, videos and more to help you start an internet business...

[www.entrepreneurs-journey.com](http://www.entrepreneurs-journey.com)