



How Fran Kerr Turned Her Acne-Prone Skin Into a Profitable Blogging Empire

Yaro: Hi everyone. This is Yaro Starak and welcome to an Entrepreneurs Journey podcast interview.

I have a very special guest on the line today. This is special to me mainly because I've been involved with this particular entrepreneur blogger on and off for quite awhile and seen this story go from the start to where it is today. I think it's going to be a really great story for you guys to learn a lot from and be inspired by.

It all evolves around Fran Kerr. Thank you for joining me!

Fran: Absolute pleasure, Yaro, and thank you for calling me a very special entrepreneur. It's wonderful.

Yaro: That's a good start! Fran runs www.HighOnHealth.org. You've probably heard of it before. If you read my blog, I've linked to it a few times and done an interview and video before with Fran.

It's a great story. This is a person who's turned her passion into a full-time income source and done it through various different ways, which is really interesting to learn about.

Fran, I'd love to start at the beginning. I guess the best way to start this is to ask what exactly is High On Health about? I know it might be difficult to answer that specifically, but what do you think people get out of it and how has it changed your life?



Fran: I'm going to start with telling everyone how I started with the blogging and how I actually got into blogging about my niche at the moment, which is kind of natural skin care, natural acne treatment, and a little bit of raw foods tucked in there as well, so a lot of nutrition.

I started the blog I think it was actually late 2007, really just as a hobby. I met you, Yaro, and we were friends and you were raving about this great blog that you were doing and how it was your job. I thought, "That's cool, but I really can't see myself doing that. I've got a great office job and I'm earning good money."

Yaro: Before you even tell me the rest of that story, what was your office job and what had you been doing before you got into blogging?

Fran: I studied multimedia at university, which was kind of a mix between IT and graphic design, which is actually quite helpful now. At the time I was working for the government in education, so I was doing distance learning – a bit of programming and a bit of project management – so I had a 9-5 government job.

Yaro: Which was pretty stable, right?

Fran: It was a great job. I had a good income. It was not the best job in the world. I didn't love it, but it was a good job. It was very stable.

Yaro: Before that had you had any of your own businesses or websites or anything like that?

Fran: I had a very bad web development business. [laughing]

Yaro: Tell us more about that. Obviously you'd been an entrepreneur before you were a blogger.



Fran: Yeah, I think I definitely have an entrepreneurial streak in me. I finished uni and I wasn't ready for a 9-5 job, so I started up a web development business and it was really just a two-year holiday. I didn't work too much and I just managed to scrape by.

Yaro: You must have learned a little bit about what it takes to run your own business then. Did that turn you off or inspire you?

Fran: Probably a bit of both. I really enjoyed the freedom, but I also love the stability of working in an office job. I really liked that, the regular income stream, definitely.

Yaro: You must have been mixed emotions then, deciding to start another business, an online business, initially doing it while you were working a job.

I've got two questions here. How did you choose your topic and how did you start working on developing it at the same time as your full-time job, because I know you did that initially.

Fran: To be honest, I did not believe you at all that I would be able to make an income from a blog. When you were telling me I should just start a blog on whatever I wanted, I was like, "Yeah, sure. I might just give this a go as a hobby," more because it just seemed like fun.

If I'd known I'd be sitting here now knowing that I'm making a good income from blogging, I would not have believed it at all. I'm sorry if that sort of amuses you now, but I didn't believe it then. [laughing]

Yaro: [laughing] No, I'm glad we smashed that belief. Hopefully we can smash it with some other people listening, too.



Fran: Yeah. So I started one really just as a hobby. It was really just for fun. I enjoy natural health. I've always loved natural health, and it was a very broad blog.

I was a little bit nervous about starting it. I wrote my first article and spent a lot of time on it, and putting it out to the world was a big step. But then no one came and no one read it, and then I realized it was not as much of a big deal as I thought, starting up a blog, so I sort of relaxed into it. I just started to write more articles about this general natural health topic, which is really broad.

Yaro: Why did you know about that?

Fran: I guess I'm really lucky. My parents were into natural health when I was very young, so would go to natural therapists. My mom was always very concerned about giving us good food and avoiding additives, and it's just in my personality. It's just what I really like. Everybody's got a hobby, and that just seems to be one of mine – alternative health.

Yaro: So you had studied that while you were doing multimedia and just for fun.

Fran: Just for fun really. I've done a little bit on and off, I can't even remember when. It was definitely before I started that blog. I'd studied twice. I studied holistic counseling and nutritional medicine at college here in Brisbane, but nothing really to make a career out of it. It was just a big interest for me.

Yaro: So naturally you thought that was the best topic for your blog.

Fran: Yeah, I liked to research it and I liked to read about it. Yeah, definitely.



Yaro: So you started this blog. You're still working your full-time job. As you said, you relaxed into it and you just sort of experimented. How did you come up with stuff to write about?

Fran: I was just inspired by my life. I think at the time I had come out of a very long relationship, and I think my very first article was sort of about that, how I helped heal my heart. Then just stuff that I was reading about or researching.

I don't know, it's a hard question because I never really had to – and still don't – have to think about what I write about. I just write about something that I'm thinking about in the day, or that I'm doing. The topics just come to me really quickly. Does that make sense?

Yaro: It does. It makes sense to me because I'm the same. I think a lot of bloggers out there who are passionate about their subject are, but there are some people out there who get bloggers block. They can't come up with things to write about.

I think it's always interesting that people who don't have that problem have trouble explaining why they don't. It's like, "What do you mean? There's so many things we could write about. How could you get stuck?"

I think in your case you must be immersing yourself in your passion. Are you reading magazines, books, hanging out with people who are in that area, or when you're just sort of walking on the street you think, "Hmm, that's interesting. I might write about it."

Fran: Absolutely. I honestly feel – maybe not so much in the beginning – but absolutely now my blog is really an extension of my life. You go to my blog and you're getting my complete personality in there.



It could just be a smoothie that I've made that morning. I've made this smoothie and it's amazing and I want to blog about it, or a raw food dessert that I've made, or it could be that I've been trying using honey as a cleanser to wash my face and that just seems to be amazing.

It's just because I've done that in my life anyway and I've thought, "Ah, that's working really well, I might as well blog about it." Or it could be that I've planted some aloe vera and it's grown well and I want to tell people about it. It really just is my own life and I want to share it.

It's kind of like going into Facebook and you want to share something that you're doing in your own life. This is just a little bit longer. It's in a blog post or it's in a video.

Yaro: And you own it, which is a good thing.

Fran: Yeah, that's right.

Yaro: So let's take this process further forward. You're blogging on a regular basis. Is it once a day or how often?

Fran: In the beginning? Probably once a week I'm guessing in the beginning. As I said, people weren't really coming and it was really just a hobby, just to test it out and see what you were going on about, that this life was so great and this blogging was so great.

It was probably just once a week, and then I developed really, really bad acne out of nowhere and I got extremely distressed about it. I guess the blog kind of turned into a bit of a healing journal for me. I started to blog about what I was trying to do to fix it, and also the emotional side as well and how I was dealing with it.



I started to write blog posts a lot more regularly than, probably every two or three days, which is what I've maintained ever since, and that's when people started to come.

Yaro: That's an interesting topic. I know we discussed the early days of your blogging and you weren't sure why people would come to your blog. I think I must have said this, and I keep saying it, "You've got to write blogs around problems."

Initially your blog might have been a little bit generic, and I probably would have said, "You really should try and find a specific niche that's more drilled down."

Was it I guess coincidence that acne kind of hit you at that time, and that happens to be a problem that a lot of people suffer from? Do you think that made a difference to the type of audience you attracted and how your audience grew?

Fran: Oh, absolutely. I guess it was kind of a blessing in disguise getting that acne condition, because I think I would have really struggled with how big the topic of natural health actually was, and trying to sort of cover everything and cover it really in-depth, because I was just striking the surface with everything there.

But when I got the acne condition and started writing about it, I could really explore all aspects of it, and with everything get right in there and try to find solutions, and I think that's what people really enjoyed.

It was kind of like a one-stop shop where they could get all the information that I was researching and doing, so they didn't have to actually go and research themselves. They could just come to my blog.



Yaro: And how did the traffic growth go? A lot of people will say it's very slow to start with. How was your blog's growth rate?

Fran: It's difficult to remember because it's been awhile now.

Yaro: When was this? 2007 when we started, right?

Fran: 2007. I just sort of seriously got into blogging in the beginning of 2008. It might have been halfway through 2007 that the blog hobby started, then the serious blog started in the beginning of 2008.

Now it's mid-2010 and I'm now averaging 3,000 unique visitors a day. I remember getting to 500, which took a long time and it was really difficult to get there, but 500 to 3,000 was really fast.

Yaro: That's a common story, isn't it? The growth is really terribly slow to begin with, and then it sort of hits a tipping point and off you go.

When did you start trying to make money from it?

Fran: Around that 500 unique visitors a day mark. I think that was actually around the 6-month period.

Yaro: What did you try first?

Fran: I think the first thing I actually did, to be honest – and this might have been a little bit before the six-month mark – was to put Google AdSense on. I think this was after a conversation with you about it.

I was saying, “Look, I'm doing this and I'm not making any money from it,” and you said, “It's probably a little bit early. Just put Google AdSense on it, because you might make a little bit of money from it,” so I did. I think after a couple of days I might have made \$1.

[laughing]



Yaro: Score! [laughing]

Fran: I was so happy to make that \$1! I was so happy and I was excited to see that I actually had made some money from it, even it was just \$1 or \$2. It was nice just to see that.

I just sat with that for awhile, and I have to say, Yaro, it was really, really hard. You know this. We've talked a lot about it and you even had conversations with me at the time where after six months I was a terrible mess about this whole blogging thing.

I felt like I was putting in so much work. I think at one stage I was working six days a week on it and putting lots of hours in all of those six days, and I hadn't really monetized it yet. I just had that AdSense on there, which was making obviously more than \$1 a day by then, but not too much more, and I was terribly frustrated.

I was crying and I was thinking, "I'm so sick of doing this, where I'm not making any money. I'm working so hard. I gave up a really great office job for this and I'm helping people every day. I'm getting a dozen questions in my inbox every morning". I felt really down about it and I felt like I was unappreciated for the amount of work that I was doing, and not making any money from it.

It was interesting how it all crashed then and there, and I could have given it up. It was a real turning point. I either stuck with it or I gave it up.

I have to be so thankful to you for making me stick with it and saying, "No, you absolutely have to stick with it. You've put all this work in," because it was so quick after that crashing time that I actually started to monetize and I started to make money, and it really accelerated.



Now I know it's kind of like sitting on a gold mine really. It just depends on how much work I put into it and how much I create, how many new things that I sell or want to sell. Does that make sense?

Yaro: Yeah, it does. I'm curious when you say you crashed. Was this emotional or did the actual blog crash or what are you referring to?

Fran: No, the blog didn't crash, it was emotional. It was completely emotional. I'm wondering if everyone kind of goes through this. It was just a moment of complete frustration.

I'm sure it's not just blogging. I'm sure it's all businesses as well. You really need to put in that initial work to sort of build it before you can really start profiting from it.

The great thing about blogging is you don't need to put much money in it to begin with really. It was interesting how it was a real turning point for me, that emotional crash, just the frustration of not earning money from putting all that work in.

Yaro: That's the interesting point there. I'm noticing this from some other people too. The amount you're putting out there, and also in your case you were getting asked a lot of questions. You were getting people emailing you expecting free advice, and you were going, "I'm happy to help you, but at some point this has to be my bread and butter." Like you said, you were feeling under-appreciated.

It's almost like the money – while it's also a tool to live off – it's a tool to reinforce your self-esteem about what you're doing as well, right?

Fran: Absolutely, definitely. I remember in the beginning when I got my first email from someone wanting my help about their skin, in the beginning it was like, "Yeah, this is great! Someone trusts me so



much they want my advice,” and I’d write them a massive email back.

That went on for a few weeks, and after that I was getting several emails every day like this. People would send me massive essays of their life story and questions. They really trusted me a lot with my advice, and it just got really overwhelming at one stage.

Yaro: So you made it through the crash. I guess it’s an emotional roller coaster ride for everyone, so you sort of managed to ride the roller coaster and kept going.

Fran: I would really like to say again, Yaro, how important it is that people do actually stick with it, because honestly if you weren’t there I would not have. I definitely would not have. If people don’t have that kind of understanding from someone, or that sort of support, I don’t know it they would, because I wouldn’t have.

I’m so grateful that I actually did stick with it. It’s a really, really important point right there.

Yaro: Everyone get a mentor. That’s the tip there. [laughing]

Before we continue the story, I just want to briefly touch on I guess more a practical element of this. You have been blogging for a long time, and you were doing this all by yourself technically, right? You set up the blog, you did everything, right?

Fran: Yeah. Well, it helped actually having that multimedia background. I have a few friends that are wanting to start their blogs now, and I can see that they’re struggling with the little design changes. I was really lucky that I was able to actually do that myself.



Yaro: It's definitely an advantage to have the tech aspects handled. Obviously for other people, going out there and getting someone to help with that, you do have that advantage.

To be honest, I've seen the changes you've made to your blog and I couldn't do some of the things you did. Even, for example, the graphic in the top of your blog at HighOnHealth.org – I couldn't probably do the photo with it like that.

Fran: Ah, that was easy. [laughing]

Yaro: So let's keep going with the story. What was the turning point? How did you keep moving and what encouraged you to continue, besides me? [laughing]

Fran: Well, besides you forcing me. [laughing] “You have to stick with it!”

I think the first thing I probably decided to sell was my ebook. I released that and did a very, very small minor launch – nothing big – and it sold very, very slowly in the beginning. I wasn't selling one every day. Every time I made a sale I was happy.

Yaro: I'm curious about this ebook. How did you write it?

Fran: I had a lot of fun actually writing that ebook. I spent a lot of time sitting in cafes writing it, and it was really just my own experiences of how I cleared my own skin through diet.

Yaro: So it's a guide to getting rid of acne through diet?

Fran: Yup.

Yaro: I know these are basic questions, but it's just a document you typed up and converted into a PDF?



Fran: Yeah, absolutely, as easy as that. I started to write this massive ebook about how to clear acne with using all the different holistic steps, and it got to 21,000 words and I wasn't even halfway done.

I thought, “This is just turning into a massive reference book. It's just too big,” so I decided to niche it right down and to make it about diet in particular. I had planned at the time on writing a series of ebooks, which didn't really eventuate. Maybe it will soon, but it's been really successful and it's helped a lot of people. It really was just writing out a Word document, throwing in some pictures, and making it into a PDF.

Yaro: How did you sell it? Did you have a sales page, and what payment system did you use?

Fran: Yeah, definitely with a sales page. I really struggle with sales pages a lot, so that was a little bit tricky for me. But I put up a sales page and I sell through ClickBank, which is wonderful. I absolutely love ClickBank. It's great.

Yaro: And you only used your blog, I presume, to sell it. Was that a case of just writing a blog post and seeing who bought it, or by then did you have your email list? I don't know that we've covered the email list yet.

Fran: Oh yeah, the email list. I love my email list and that's the main way that I sell the ebook even now. I sell it through the email list. It was just writing a newsletter in the sequence of my newsletter that actually promotes the book.

I've got advertising on my blog, I've got advertising on my YouTube channel as well, and also right in the beginning when people sign up to my mini-course, so that's signing up to my email list, I've got a



“How to Clear Acne” 7-step mini-course in there, and that’s got a lot of advertisements for my book there. At the bottom of every page there’s an advertisement for my book.

Yaro: Now I can’t remember the sequence there – you probably can’t either – but you went from starting the blog, and then you had a general topic of holistic health, then you got acne, then you started to write about how you were helping to treat your acne. Then you probably thought, “This is a very specific niche,” and we probably agreed that was a good way to go.

I think then you started the email newsletter as an extension of the blog by putting an opt-in box on it. Does that sound right?

Fran: Yeah, definitely. When people ask me now, the people I’m around who are asking me advice about blogs, I would tell them to start that email list as soon as they can. It really has been the most successful thing for me in making money, because it’s been a really great tool for promotion for everything that I sell.

Yaro: But it wouldn’t have anyone on it without the blog.

Fran: Exactly, yeah. You need to provide free content of value to actually have people want to hear from you. They have to go together.

Yaro: You did the steps well. You started with a blog with great free content, then you started an email list and put a sequence of emails into it about helping people deal with their acne. Then when you finished writing your ebook you were able to put some emails in your email list, as well as some banners on your blog, and start making some sales.

You said the sales were slow to begin with. How much was the ebook?



Fran: The ebook sells for \$27 USD. I think I get about \$23-25 of that through ClickBank.

Yaro: And nowadays you sell how many?

Fran: At least one a day as a minimum.

Yaro: That’s awesome, and that’s been for how long now that you’ve been selling one a day?

Fran: It’s been a good two years I think. I calculated it all up the other day and I got quite excited about how much just me sitting in cafes enjoying myself with a cup of tea writing out something on a Word document has generated. It’s been many thousands of dollars. I can’t remember how much it is, but it’s a lot when you sell at least one a day.

Even when I was out running this morning – this is really bad and shows me how addicted I am to email – I take my iPhone with me because I listen to music, so I was running and I was coming home, and often when I’m coming home I check my email on my iPhone.

I had four book sales, because I’ve got two books now, and I noticed it in my email. I went, “Great! I sold four books last night in my sleep. How awesome is that?” It’s like magic, it really is.

Yaro: [laughing] That’s pretty cool! You’re right, it’s addictive. I know when I started making affiliate sales, I had a Blackberry very briefly back before the iPhone, and you get those emails that say, “You made money!” It’s very exciting. [laughing]

Fran: It is! It’s great.



Yaro: Now you mentioned YouTube and I think this is really important to talk about. This is something I didn't really teach you to do, because I don't make heavy use of YouTube, so tell me what's the deal with that?

Fran: Oh, I'm so proud of myself that I actually taught you something, Yaro, and inspired Gideon. [laughing]

YouTube is really, really wonderful. It really came out of my extreme laziness. It was a really random way that I actually got into doing YouTube. I was intending on actually selling stuff through eBay, and I did a whole big eBay course and really wanted to take it seriously, and actually recorded a video to put on my About Me page. There's some kind of About Me page in eBay.

At the time I thought, "Wow, that was kind of fun and really easy. I might just have a go at recording blog posts by video." I recorded one and I enjoyed the process, and my readers really loved it as well.

I enjoyed that extra feedback I got in YouTube, because this was right in the beginning of my blog as well. It might have been within the first six months, probably just in the beginning stages of when I started to take my blog seriously.

I really enjoyed that extra traffic from YouTube and responding to comments in YouTube as well was really good for me in the beginning. It was kind of like there weren't that many people coming to my blog, but there were lots of people watching my videos in YouTube, so it was more worthwhile.

Yaro: So you got that feedback that you weren't seeing so much in blog comments.

Fran: Exactly, yeah.



Yaro: How did you initially record those videos? How did you make them?

Fran: I had a really terrible web cam on my old PC notebook that did the job. It was okay. I actually have some friends who have gone to some of my first YouTube videos and said I look like a completely different person, and I do. I think that's partially to do with quality of the web cam, and also I was probably very nervous in the beginning stages as well. You can use anything at all really to record video.

Yaro: What do you do today with recording video?

Fran: I've gone through many different steps. I went from that to getting a Mac, and actually the camera on a Mac is great. I've got a MacBook Pro and it's really, really good, and the audio's not too bad either. I spent a long time, probably a good year at least, recording videos from my MacBook.

Now following Gideon's advice, which I love – he's so good at doing video online – I've bought the Flip and I've got the little audio device that I carry around with me. I often go to parks and really enjoy it. I set up my Flip camera and my little audio recorder and I record video that way. It's high definition and the sound quality is excellent as well, and it does make a huge difference.

Yaro: Before you used video, you had no experience in front of a camera or talking or speaking on stage or anything, right?

Fran: Not at all.

Yaro: So how did you get the balls to get over this fear of the fact that you're going to be basically performing on a camera? You just sort of sit down and talk to the audience, right? That's how you do it?



Fran: Yeah. I’m telling you, it was laziness, and that was probably the biggest reason why I did it. I actually find it a lot of fun as well, and now I just love it. I really enjoy it. I thrive in front of the camera. I really do love being in front of the camera.

It did take me probably a good year of being a little bit nervous and a little bit self-conscious about it before I actually got there. I don’t think that’s particularly normal. I think for most people it’s a lot faster until they get comfortable in front of the camera, but it definitely did take me that long.

I hate it how people can go and see some of my first videos, because you can really tell. On some of them I look cranky, and I’m not cranky, I’m just nervous. [laughing]

Yaro: [laughing] The angry videos really sell well, don’t they?

Fran: That’s how it was in the beginning, yeah. I have to add in, Yaro, that because I do have a beauty blog and a skin care blog, it’s really important that people actually do see me. They can see my skin and they can see when I talk about beauty that I do take care of myself and I do take care of my skin, and also because it’s a health topic that I do look healthy.

I get a lot of comments from people saying I do look healthy and vibrant, and I think that goes a long way when they can actually see my picture.

Yaro: For credibility and all. So you don’t do just video, though. I checked your blog yesterday and you had written a 3,000-word article. I was like, “Wow, that’s big.”

Fran: That’s so unusual for me. I have to say that when I go and do a video, spending a lot of fun time in a park and then recording a video for 10



minutes, it's very quick. Uploading it takes time, but I can set it to upload and then go and do the washing or go and make dinner or whatever.

The article that I wrote that was 3,000 words long is an article that I really wanted to write about, because it was a big topic that I feel very passionate about, which is rare for me to actually to write. I struggled with it because it took me about a week of researching and many hours of writing, which in comparison to doing a video it took a lot more of my time.

And trust me, I tried to do a video about it first, but I had some freaky things happening with my camera to try and do that topic. My camera kept not working and the batteries kept going flat, and the article just wanted to be written.

Yaro: Fair enough. You can't argue with that. So your blog has become a combination of text and video content.

In terms of traffic, I'm assuming you get quite a good chunk from YouTube, quite a good chunk from search engines, and all of these people are making it onto your email list – well, not all of them, but some of them are making it onto your email list and your RSS feed. That's how the system works in developing an audience. Is that a good summary?

Fran: Yeah, that's right. The only marketing I really do is – well, no marketing, because I just put the videos up. I tried doing the whole writing in forums thing, and it wasn't me. I found it really boring.

I know there's even things you can do to get your videos out to more sites, but out of laziness I think it didn't get in there. I found that doing the videos was really good enough to get the traffic.



Now I can go and mix it up. Sometimes I do feel like writing and I will write, and I can do a combination. I get 3,000 unique visitors a day still, so it seems to be perfect. It seems to work really well.

Yaro: In your opinion, how have you built an audience? Your proactive marketing here is limited. You're basically just creating content and putting it on some places. How are people finding you? What do you think is the secret here?

Fran: That's an interesting question, because I probably don't know. [laughing] It must be YouTube, it really must be, and also just having the blog out there for awhile.

To be honest, I don't like talking about myself as if I'm so great, because I think I'm just as good as everyone else is out there, and everyone can do it, but it really does make a difference using personality on the videos.

I never script or write a video. I'm just on there and it's my own real personality, and I think people really appreciate me not having a mask on my videos and that I'm a genuine personality. They really resonate well with that.

Then I do often make mistakes. I might say silly things that don't make sense. I'm a real person, and I think people really resonate well with it.

Yaro: You're probably getting a combination of traffic from Google and then traffic from YouTube and that's it really, and of course your repeat visitors.

Fran: That's it! Yeah, that's it.



Yaro: And the reason why you get traffic from Google is because you've written articles and produced content for three years now.

Fran: Yeah, my videos come up in Google as well.

Yaro: I think we've pretty well covered how you've built this machine. We know that you make money from two ebooks now – one to begin with, and you only just launched the other one recently.

Like you said, it's nice to wake up to some sales, but you've done some other things to make money as well, so can you take us through the next steps? You released the first ebook, and then what was the next plan? You had some sponsors too, right? Some banner sponsors?

Fran: Yeah, I do have some sponsors. It's not the biggest money earner on my blog. I think in my particular industry and my niche, that's really slow to build. I do have a couple sponsors that have stayed with me for a really long time. One of them has been with me for two years now, but that's really just a small section.

What I kind of went to from the ebook was I started selling a physical product. I started selling a moisturizer. That was a really interesting synchronicity thing. I ended up in New York and stumbling into this store. It was recommended to me, but I just sort of ended up in front of it and tried the moisturizer out and absolutely loved it. It's a raw organic moisturizer and it's beautiful, and I decided to sell it.

To be honest I don't even know why I decided to sell it, but I just did. It seems like something like that would be a real hassle, when ebooks are so easy, and I have to be honest, physical products are a lot more work than digital products.



But my audience just really loves buying physical products. They want to buy moisturizers and cleansers and face products.

Yaro: How did you do this, though? You walked into the store, you found this product – what is it, Bee Yummy?

Fran: Bee Yummy Skin Food™, right. It's a moisturizer, and I tried it and I thought, “Wow, this is perfect. This is so good for acne-prone skin and people who suffer from acne. I really have to tell people about this, and wouldn't it be wonderful if I could sell it.”

It's a very, very small store in Manhattan, New York. It's not a big business at all, and you can only physically buy it from that one place in Manhattan. You can buy it online, but physically only from there.

So I negotiated with them to get them to drop ship for awhile, so they were actually drop shipping for me.

Yaro: You were in Australia too when you did all this negotiating, right? You found it in New York...

Fran: Actually no. I was traveling around the world, which is even harder. I think I was in Canada for a bit. I was the USA, I was in Canada, and I was through Europe and doing all this stuff.

I remember the orders were actually a real mess at one stage. I was in Glasgow trying to find an internet café with a connection so that I could actually sort it out, which was a real hassle, but it sorted itself out. But yeah, I was traveling around the world trying to do it.

Yaro: So you're drop shipping a skin care product, organizing it around the world while writing your blog and maintaining everything else. Did you eventually not drop ship? Did you start to buy wholesale or anything for the product? I can't remember.



Fran: I was drop shipping for awhile, which was great. I was really lucky. I was sending them the orders and it just seemed like a dream come true. It was so easy. It was like a digital product in that I didn't have to do anything.

Yaro: It's worth explaining, because people may not know what drop shipping is. Can you just explain how that would work?

Fran: I think drop shipping officially when companies actually do it well – it can be a little bit different – but the way that we did it was I was receiving the orders. People were paying me through PayPal and then I would put it all in a spreadsheet and I would email that spreadsheet off to Live Live™ and they would actually send me an invoice, charging me wholesale prices, but they would do all the packaging and shipping for me.

I didn't have to see any physical product or do any physical shipping myself. I was just collecting the money, doing all the marketing, and purchasing wholesale off the business.

Yaro: Then you changed that.

Fran: Yeah, I changed it because Live Live™ -- although I love them to bits and they're really wonderful and they're a very great green ethical business – they're a bit slow with the orders, and sometimes orders weren't being shipped for two weeks after I received and sent it off to them, so my customers were getting really unhappy.

I remember once – and this was in Glasgow actually at that time when I was trying to find an internet café – I had seven complaints from customers in that one day from customers who weren't getting their product. I realized I had to change.



I was there in Europe organizing to get wholesale shipments of Live Live™ sent to Australia to my sister, who would then package it off, usually back to the States where it came from. That way I could make the customers happy and make things run smoothly.

Now it's good because I have several products from all different places, mainly from Australia now, so drop shipping it doesn't work. Now people are buying a Bee Yummy™ and then they're buying like a hemp product that I have, and another product.

Then I've got an assistant who works with me, and she keeps all the stock and she packages it for me and ships it off.

Yaro: You kind of skipped ahead there. So you had the Bee Yummy™ product and you had all these other products, and you took control by actually buying them wholesale and taking them into where you live and then shipping them to your customers directly.

Fran: Yeah, which I struggled with at first, because I felt like I was being really terrible for the environment, but unfortunately I had to put my business first this time around. I was bringing the packages into Australia.

Yaro: That's something that you dealt with that a lot of people may not have considered. You've always looked for the environmental option if you can, which is admirable as well.

How did you sell a product on a blog? Was it just a case of writing a blog post with a PayPal link, or how did it go?

Fran: It's so easy with video and YouTube. It's really easy. I have to absolutely love the product. I'll only sell something that I believe does work and I'm truly passionate about and think is a wonderful thing anyway.



I'll do a video about it, and because I love it anyway that comes across. I don't have to do any fake sales. I have so much pre-eminence I guess, and people do really trust what I say, that it's easy to just do the video and talk about, "Hey, this product's great. By the way, you can buy it from my store, and here's the link underneath the video." You'll find that a lot of people will actually click on the link and they buy it.

Yaro: And how did you make a store?

Fran: In the beginning I had a plugin for WordPress, which was okay for awhile. It looked alright. It looked a little bit clunky, but it had so many problems and I was very frustrated with it.

Yaro: So it's a plugin that creates an online sort of shopping cart in your WordPress blog?

Fran: Yeah, that's what I had in the beginning for about a year.

Yaro: Do you remember the name of that plugin, just in case someone wants to find it?

Fran: I think it's changed. It was either WordPress ShoppingCart and it's moved to WordPress ECommerce, or the other way around, but I think that's it now – WordPress ECommerce.

It's okay, it does the job, but there are a lot of problems with it. I realized about three months ago that I'd had enough of it just falling apart and breaking and not looking anything like I wanted it to, and being extremely unusable.

I bought – or it's kind of like you rent a shopping space – at BigCommerce. You can actually go to my blog and take a look to see



what it is. I pay about \$25 USD per month for that.

You can customize it. You can put your own little banner on there. It's just beautiful. It's a wonderful shopping cart, and my sales have doubled since I've changed to that system, which is huge and I wish I'd known that a lot earlier.

Yaro: It's called what? Big Commerce?

Fran: That's right, BigCommerce.com.

Yaro: Or just go to www.HighOnHealth.org or .com, they both work, and you can click the Shop button on Fran's blog and you'll see the shop, which I think looks really professional.

Fran: It's great, and it just works so well. You can sell gift vouchers and you can give discount codes to people, and it can plug straight into your accounting system, which I haven't done yet and I should.

Yaro: They've got Top Sellers I see here. So how many products are you selling now?

Fran: I think there's about 11 or so. And you can even sell digital products in there too, which is great. It's another place that I can sell my ebooks as well. I can sell them there or I can sell them through ClickBank too.

Yaro: So you do both now?

Fran: Yeah, and the great thing about Big Commerce selling digital products is you get all of it. You sell it for \$13 and you get \$13, or minus the PayPal fee if you use PayPal. But it's nowhere near as much as ClickBank, so I make more profit from the ebook sales in that.



Yaro: So you direct people there now I presume to buy the ebooks?

Fran: No. I probably should do that. [laughing]

Yaro: If you've got less fees that way. I thought you actually sent people there.

Fran: Well, there is actually one thing that doesn't work too well with it, to be honest. With the digital products it's great, but me or my assistant actually have to mark in the order as completed, so they're not necessarily getting an instant link.

ClickBank works beautifully. It goes straight away, so it's only five minutes that they have to wait, but we have to physically mark their payment as yes, we've received their payment, and verify that we have.

Yaro: I see the shopping cart has a nice facility to sell more products. Once you've clicked to buy one it says, "You might also like to buy these other things," and it has great pictures of the products. It must be good to sort of bundle things together like that.

Fran: It's great, isn't it? It's really awesome.

Yaro: Very cool. Now this is different. You're the only example I know of who's actually selling through a shopping cart, of all my students who have started to blog, which is very cool.

How have you found running a shopping cart? How did you get 11 products, and are these all things you buy at wholesale? Do you have like a cupboard somewhere where you're stocking all this stuff and then you ship it out by hand, or how does this work?



Fran: I don't know. As I said, it just works well for me. My customers really seem to want to buy physical products. They really like it. While it is a hassle, it does earn good money for me and it is definitely one of those pieces of the puzzle which is a good income earner.

I've gone through a range of different products that I've sold. I remember I spent the beginning of 2009 really having fun with trying out different products from the store. At one stage I was selling raw chocolate, which was a lot of fun, although I found my housemates and I ate more than we sold, so I had to literally stop selling it.
[laughing]

In my house here, before I got an assistant – which is great now – but while I was actually doing the shipping myself, I have a linen cupboard in this house and I could just fit everything in two shelves in the linen cupboard and that was fine.

The packaging boxes through the post office and all the envelopes took up a lot more space, and all the bubble wrap and that kind of stuff. It doesn't really take up too much, though.

Yaro: It's cool. It's like a little home business.

Fran: It is, and it was really fun for a year. I absolutely loved it. The post office got to know me and they thanked me for how much business I was giving Australia Post, which is really cool as well. But after a year or year and a half it got really boring, unfortunately. It had to go.

With the post thing I had to actually physically package everything up, and with international orders I had to fill out a form for every one and go to the post office. I had to do that Monday through Friday every single week with no breaks.

It was always stressful when I was going away, so it was really good



when I decided to actually hire someone and outsource someone to do that for me.

Yaro: Is that the first time you've brought someone on to help?

Fran: Yes and no. I have had friends do graphic design and a little bit of IT stuff, but this is someone who's regular, who works with me now every day.

Yaro: So you've got two ebooks and you've got a shopping cart with 11 products in it that's been selling for quite awhile now too. How long have you had the shopping cart for?

Fran: Selling physical products? Since probably mid-2008, so two years.

Yaro: Two years. So these are both dependable income streams that you've compounded onto each other. And of course you've got a sort of small base of advertising income as well. Are we missing anything in the picture?

Fran: For income?

Yaro: Yeah, for monetization.

Fran: I've got the AdSense which I do through my blogs and through the videos as well through a YouTube partnership, which is good. I've got sponsorships, and I do have a coaching program as well.

Yaro: Tell us about that.

Fran: I started up a coaching program last year. It's kind of the next step after blogging to do a membership site. I spent a really long time developing this content and these videos.



I have to say I don't love it. It's okay, but I really do prefer selling the ebooks and selling things in the store rather than the coaching program. I've found that the hours that I put into the coaching program are a lot more than what I do for everything else.

Yaro: You're a good example. In this case you were following the formula. You went from starting a blog, starting an email list, then your first digital product, an ebook, and then the next thing is a membership site, which is obviously something I recommend to a lot of people.

You worked pretty hard on this. What's in the membership site, just to clarify?

Fran: The membership site has a private forum to go into. It has food recipes, skin care recipes, it's got a whole heap of interviews by people that have cleared their skin already, and it's got professional interviews by skin care professionals.

I send out two training videos a week, so that's up an hour video they get each week for four months. It's just a four-month membership site. I did plan on making it six months, but I was developing the content while the first students were in.

I got to the four-month period and, to be honest, I just ran out of things to talk about, because it is a lot. An hour a week is a real lot of information about acne. I felt like I was done after the four months.

I also feel that it's difficult in my niche. It's really difficult, because acne is such an individualized thing. What works for someone does not work for someone else, and there's no complete formula that you can just put out there that will necessarily work for everyone.

Sure, there's a whole heap of holistic steps that I can package and give to people that will definitely clear it for some and make a huge



significant difference for others, which is why I can sell ebooks and that kind of thing.

But when it comes to a course where you really want to help people and spend a lot of time helping them, then it has to be an individualized thing, which is why for me it's just too much work.

If I had 50 members then I'd have to go in there and really look at the case history of each of those 50 members and help them to come up with a treatment plan.

Yaro: So it's safe to say that the actual membership site has obviously helped some people.

Fran: Oh absolutely, definitely.

Yaro: And you've made money from it as well?

Fran: Yeah, definitely. But the amount of money that I've made and the amount of time that I'd like to give the people doesn't seem to be worth it, because I constantly feel guilty that I'm not giving each person enough time. I would really like to give them a lot of time, but I'm not getting anywhere near as much as I would if they purchased an hour of a coaching call, for example.

Yaro: This is a personal choice. You could obviously continue to try and develop the program and a next level of coaching. These are things to talk about in a strategy discussion, so probably not worth going into it now.

But long story short, you combine now a membership site with also selling physical products, your ebooks, and the advertising. So you've got four income streams coming off your blog and your email list.



Fran: That’s right, and affiliate products as well. [laughing] You know how it is, Yaro. It’s just lots of little income streams from so many different areas, and packaged together they make your income.

Yaro: And the affiliate products, is that just a case of finding something you love and doing a video about it and posting it on your blog and in YouTube?

Fran: Yeah, adding it to my email sequence, doing a YouTube video about it, and pretty much that’s it. Sometimes I put in banner advertisements as well. It’s finding a product that I think is wonderful, will help people, and is great. It hasn’t always been about acne or skin care. It’s often been about nutrition and raw food.

Yaro: And how have you found these products?

Fran: Just from doing my own fun internet surfing really, or being on email lists from other people or reading other people’s blogs or Twitter – that kind of thing.

Yaro: So you’re well and truly involved in your industry as well. You’re reading other people’s blogs and you enjoy it.

Fran: Definitely.

Yaro: I think we’ve painted a picture of what you do. It actually sounds quite tremendous in size now when you really drill down into all the different things.

The fact is, you’re still basically doing this all pretty much by yourself, besides the assistant who’s handling the shipping of the physical stuff.

A day in the life of Fran now – what do you do?



Fran: A day in the life of Fran? That’s a really, really difficult question to answer because I’m terrible one for routine, so I don’t really have one. I’ve told people a lot recently that I don’t feel like I work. I feel like I’m on one continuous holiday. Although I sometimes do have to do things that I don’t particularly want to do or don’t particularly love, most of the blog is fun.

I spend probably a lot of the morning answering emails and doing admin type things, then I’ll often do a video or do a blog post in the afternoon, or develop a product or change my blog design or do something like that. It’s difficult to say, because what I do is always so fluid. Is that sort of what you meant?

Yaro: Yeah. It’s the same answer I think I’d give. Outside of the work, you’re just living your normal life, right? Hanging with friends etc.

Fran: That’s right, and what I love is that I can do whatever I want. I get really confused now because I’ve forgotten what it’s like to be in an office job where people have to go to work and they can’t just go to the beach one day if they want to.

I’m getting up really early now, but I loved how I could start mornings really slow if I wanted to, so I could sleep in. I really love making up big breakfasts. I love having soups and big yummy cooked things for breakfast, and then eating it in the sun. It’s 10:00 by the time I start work and who cares, because I can just work whenever I want and that kind of thing.

Yaro: That’s a nice picture.

Just to wrap it up, Fran, if you had Fran of three years ago sitting in front of you who’s just about to start, who’s representative of a lot of the people listening to this call who are just starting, or who are at a



stage where they're not making enough to live off, what would you tell them are the most important things that you did right in the process that they should replicate?

Fran: Definitely persistence I think is the right thing, and discipline. They sound like really horrible boring words, but really they're not. It just means to sticking to writing a blog post every two to three days. I think that's really important.

If you're leaving it for a week or if you're leaving it for two weeks, then people are going to come to the blog and they're going to think that you're not taking it very seriously or are that into it either. I think when people see that you're enjoying the process and loving what you're writing about, then that goes a long way definitely. And sticking with it when it wasn't earning much, and really getting through that crash and persisting definitely worked in the long run.

Yaro: What about mindset? That was obviously the biggest weakness that potentially could have put you off. How do you think better, is the best way I can put this. [laughing]

Fran: What do you mean? [laughing]

Yaro: Well, how do you think differently now compared to what you did when you had all that self-doubt? You must have a different belief structure behind this.

Fran: Really, though, I think that comes from making a sale. Once you've made the first sale you know you can do it, and then you can make another one and another one.

I guess if people can see that I had that much doubt and I really didn't think it was going to happen, and I was certain and every single cell of my body was so certain after that six months when I



crashed that I was not going to make any money from this, and now I can see endless possibilities.

Now I can see that I can just add this product, and sell that affiliate product, and do this and that, and I can keep making more money from it. That's, I guess, a more positive mindset and a more open mind about the possibilities of it.

Yaro: It sounds like celebrating the little successes along the way is really important, whether it's a comment or a sale – all those little things.

Fran: Definitely, yeah.

Yaro: Great, Fran! To find out more about you our listeners can go to www.HighOnHealth.org. Obviously that website's about you, but I guess for people who are interested in the same subjects as you – we're talking about things like acne treatment, and what else will they find there?

Fran: It's not so much about acne treatment anymore. There's an acne section in there where you can get everything that you ever need to clear acne naturally and holistically. I talk a lot about nutrition now and other kooky health stuff, so lots of alternative cutting edge health stuff in there as well, and raw food especially.

Yaro: I really recommend everyone check out just the simplicity of Fran's blog design, the email newsletter opt-in, and the things like her shopping cart. It's fantastic. Go check out her YouTube page. You can see someone who's really developed a great presence in YouTube and drives that traffic back to her blog, and how she's doing it.

So there's a lot to learn from Fran, and as you can hear from this interview, she started literally with coming from the work force and



never having had a blog or done this strategy before, so it's certainly possible.

I think you can hear in Fran's voice as well that she's not pretending to be an expert in any of all this, and has had some pretty good success. Hopefully you all find that inspiring.

Thank you, Fran, for telling your story so honestly. I really appreciate that and look forward to see where you head to next with it.

Fran: An absolute pleasure. Thanks.