CTRL+CLICK CAST #25 SaaS with Ryan Masuga

[Music]

Lea Alcantara: You are listening to CTRL+CLICK CAST. We inspect the web for you! Today Ryan Masuga returns to the show to talk about Software as a Service. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host:

Emily Lewis: Emily Lewis!

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Emily Lewis: CTRL+CLICK would like to thank Pixel & Tonic for being our major sponsor.

[Music ends] Hi Lea, how are you?

Lea Alcantara: I'm really enjoying summer.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I always forget how special it is for you living in Seattle. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs] Oh, I'm just grilling, grilling away.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And having a great time really like so many things are happening this summer, so I'm excited.

Emily Lewis: That's so nice. I feel the exact opposite during summer.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I avoid going outside because it's just so freaking hot.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And I'm pretty pale and I sunburn pretty easily, so even when I do go out, I'm kind of covered, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah.

Emily Lewis: I've got sleeves on and a big hat and all that other stuff. So yeah, it's the rest of the year that I enjoy here in Albuquerque, not this time.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: In fact, it's the worst, because we also have monsoon season.

Lea Alcantara: Oh.

Emily Lewis: Which means we get some rain pretty much once a day in some part of the state, but it actually brings humidity which is the one thing that we don't have the rest of the year, and I don't know about you, but I hate hot and humid. That's like the worst combination.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I know that. I don't think anyone is really a fan of hot and humid. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yeah, I know. Maybe like mold. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I know. Yeah, and the other thing that I did this weekend that I think everyone should do, but I feel like everyone already has, is watch *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah, that's on my list.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. I think it's a star-making role for Chris Pratt who I already loved in *Parks & Recreation*.

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah. You love that show, you've mentioned it to me a couple of times.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. You should put it on your radar, it's good.

Emily Lewis: I have to finish the five other series. I'm trying to finish before I add anything new to the list, but that's been on my list to see. I tend not to like going to the theater anymore.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: The older I get the less I like being with other people.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah.

Emily Lewis: So I'll just be waiting for that to come out on either Xbox or Amazon or whichever one is going to hit first to rent on demand.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: I myself took four days in a row off. [Laughs]
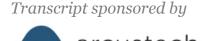
Lea Alcantara: Nice.

Emily Lewis: I'm shocked it could happen, but I did nothing.

Lea Alcantara: That's amazing.

Emily Lewis: In fact, last night I sort of looked in the mirror, I was like, "Okay, it's been enough." I feel gross and depressing. I'm like a complete sloth."

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I just watched documentaries and some TV and late in bed and sat in my recliner. It was heavenly, and like it was the first I ignored all emails…

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I ignored phone messages and text messages. It was great and it was needed. I think I had told you last week how burnt out I was. It was just to a point of which everything had to be put on hold just to get myself grounded again.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I mean, I feel like that's running a business in a nutshell at times, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Like it gets so crazy and you push and push and push, and then you forget like, "I really need to take a break sometimes."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And I feel like our guest today will have a lot to say about running a business in his thoughts.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, so let's get to that. Today we're talking with a friend of the show, Ryan Masuga. Ryan is a talented designer and developer. He owns Masuga Design, which in addition to specializing in creative and front-end development and CMS integration, is also responsible for the Lamplighter SaaS application for site monitoring. Ryan is also the mastermind behind devot:ee, the resource for top ExpressionEngine add-ons. Welcome back to the show, Ryan.
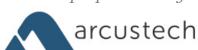
Ryan Masuga: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Lea Alcantara: So Ryan, can you tell our listeners a little bit more about yourself?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, I'm officially old by web standards.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: [Laughs] I'm in early 40s, married, have a couple of kids. I have a third child on the way in October, and I just got off a week's vacation, and the first thing I'm doing is talking to you ladies.

Lea Alcantara: Awesome.

Emily Lewis: So you've got back from vacation, and are you just completely ready to get back to work, or like me, I did mention I took a couple of days off like I recognized I need to get back to work, but I'm like, "Oh, it's been so nice."

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, sometimes I'm ready to rock, and on other times, it's just kind of like this where it's over really, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: I'm not quite ready, so this is just a great segueway back into doing actual work, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right. This is sort of work. [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: So you've been in the web design and dev business for a while. What made you decide to branch out into creating products?

Ryan Masuga: Well, we had started out just doing client work, which is you get paid for the hours that you're working type thing, and then we developed devot:ee which is the marketplace thing, which was our first experience of making money while you sleep type with these people always buying add-ons.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So I thought the next logical step was to do something that's recurring revenue on a monthly basis that's something that is our own thing. So for me, it's kind of expanding revenue streams and trying something new.

Emily Lewis: Was this something that just – I don't know – came to you naturally over time, or was it something you saw other people doing and kind of wanted to emulate?

Ryan Masuga: Look, what we have has kind of stemmed out of a popular add-on that we made, devot:ee Monitor for ExpressionEngine sites.

Emily Lewis: Oh right.

Ryan Masuga: Which kind of gives you an overview per site of what's going on with that site, so the next step was to let's centralize that, let's see all this information in one place, and a couple of years ago we were working with another EE firm to kind of partner with them to do this, but they decided to just ditch the idea and they've kind of let us go and they gave it to us with their blessing like, "Hey, do what you want with it." So it was originally Expression Monitor, and we said, "Well, why stop there? Why stop at ExpressionEngine? Let's make this a more full featured thing, so we aren't tied to any one ecosystem or any one CMS."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Ryan Masuga: So it kind of evolved organically.

Emily Lewis: So if I understand correctly, you started out more as a designer than a developer.

Ryan Masuga: Right.

Emily Lewis: Would you have been able to kind of make this transition with your business in your career without having first hired some devs on your team?

Ryan Masuga: Absolutely not. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: I think it was a Henry Ford who's big on hiring people who's smarter than yourself in different areas, and that's what I do definitely. Alex knows the CSS. I didn't know a grunt from anything, and he's teaching me all this kind of stuff, and then there was PHP, like I can never hope to do. So having these other people know what they're doing in their respective areas is huge. There's just no way I could do it myself.
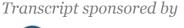
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: I think it's ridiculous.

Emily Lewis: So I'm just curious, how much work are you doing hands on these days? Are you mostly kind of managing and overseeing? Or are you also getting into any design work or development work?

Ryan Masuga: Most of our client work is still ExpressionEngine.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: We do a couple of smaller sites on newer CMSs just to give those a trial run, but I'll get in and do ExpressionEngine work because that's my core knowledge. We still have Design in the name, but our latest version of our website, we kind of got rid of that. It just has my last name on it because we don't want to give anyone a false idea that we do a lot of actual design.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So yeah, I'll do hands on when it's the EE stuff, but other frameworks and things like Laravel and stuff, I don't really do any hands on. It's more idea stuff and general management.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So I'm curious about when you hire your full time devs and you say you wouldn't have been able to even pursue any of that, did you even conceived of having your own Software as a Service before these devs, or was it through the act of having devs on your staff you were able to open up your mind to further possibilities?
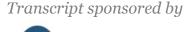
Ryan Masuga: Right. That latter is totally correct.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: This was not something that I ever thought of, and in working with this other company and talking about getting a fraction of the revenue for allowing them to use our data from devot:ee, when it became apparent that they weren't going to pursue it, then it was like, "Oh, light bulb moment, why don't we do this?"

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: And gee, what a neat model? You know, hey, if we can spend 500 hours building something and ten people use it, a hundred people use it, a thousand people use it without putting an extra bit of time into it, that type of scale is pretty interesting.

Emily Lewis: Well, let's talk about some of the specifics of Lamplighter a little bit. So you mentioned it evolved a bit from the devot:ee Monitor add-on that you had and it was also a concept that you discussed with another firm. But can you talk about the details, how it works, what your customers who purchased it what they get?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, well, it's still a free add-on basically. So you can still use it. The Lamplighter add-on took over for the devot:ee Monitor add-on.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: Because we basically had two add-ons doing the exact same thing, and from a development standpoint, we just couldn't spend time supporting two separate things, so we decided to kind of just nix the devot:ee Monitor and just make that function the same in the Lamplighter. So that's free, anyone can use it. I think it has had 500-some downloads in the last 90 days or something. It's popular.

Emily Lewis: And just as soon as you did that to the devot:ee Monitor, which is now I guess part of the…

Ryan Masuga: Is… yeah.

Emily Lewis: Or is Lamplighter, that monitors what version of an add-on you currently have installed and notifies you in the control panel of an upgrade?

Ryan Masuga: Right, right. So you can install that on your ExpressionEngine-based sites and when you log in, you can open this accessory and it tells you everything that's up to date or out of date, and

then it gives you a convenient links to go look this stuff up on devot:ee and that sort of thing. So you have to log in to the site to do that, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So Lamplighter is just kind of the next step there. You already have this add-on installed. Basically you put a key in. If you sign up for Lamplighter, you kind of put a key in that corresponds to that site, and now the site is reporting back to this central location, so now I can log into my account and I could have hundred EE sites and I can instead of logging into a hundred of them to see what's going on, I just see it all right there in addition to…

Lea Alcantara: Right.

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Ryan Masuga: We work with certain CMSs right now. If EE has a new version out, you'll see that. If Craft has a new version out, you'll see that, and it will tell you what sites are using that. So we found that if we put this all into a timeline, which for lack of a better comparison, it's kind of like Facebook for your websites.
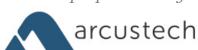
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: So you've got this timeline that tells you everything that goes on, and for example, I just came off vacation as I said, and I logged into Lamplighter so I could see what happened here last week. So I could scan through the timeline, "Oh, commits were made on this site. Add-ons were updated on this, et cetera, et cetera."

Emily Lewis: Oh, so it's even your own internal development, you mentioned commits?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, you can hook up versioning with Bitbucket or GitHub and have those report back analytics, Google Analytics. You can see analytics info in one place. That's kind of like a centralized location for all of this kind of stuff, information about your site and that we have notebooks, the secured notebooks, where you can share information with your clients who don't need an account or your teammates and information from your site, so when I'm looking at any given site, I'm getting a report from the site about how out of date it is or that sort of thing, what its health is with the analytics.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And then I've got all our information, and they're about MySQL connections or FTP info or current jobs, anything we need to store in the notes. Because I found out we were storing this stuff everywhere.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: We had wikis. We had local wikis. We had a paid wiki. We had form-type stuff. I had Evernote pages. It was just everywhere.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So we wanted to kind of make this something that where you can put all of this. I think we're still trying to find our perfect product market fit which is what the core of this thing really is, and it's helping when you have people that are using it give you feedback because the features I use the most are not necessarily those that people who are paying for it are using the most.

Lea Alcantara: I wanted to take a little bit of a step back. You mentioned that Lamplighter kind of evolved from the devot:ee Monitor, et cetera. I'm curious if you thought of other products at all before finally settling and like devoting time on Lamplighter.

Ryan Masuga: Well, we built placeIMG as an experiment.

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: And that was kind of a way for Ben to get out of doing ExpressionEngine work in a way. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Just to break it up. So we were like, "Oh, what should we build this on?" So we picked the Slim framework to build like this lightweight FPO temporary placement image thing that we thought we could do better than some of the ones that are out there, and today it should cross 15 million images served back into today.

Emily Lewis: Wow!

Lea Alcantara: Wow!

Ryan Masuga: So that's kind of a cool little project, but it's absolutely free and it basically costs us money and bandwidth is the thing.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So it was like, "Wow, yeah, we can have an idea and build something and get out there and people will just use it. How cool is that?"

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: So can we do something that actually will pay us back somehow? [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Right, right. [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: But that's the only other product that we've put out there other than devot:ee, if the marketplace can be considered a product.

Emily Lewis: So you mentioned that Lamplighter as an add-on is free?

Ryan Masuga: Right.

Emily Lewis: Where does the pay you back come in?

Ryan Masuga: Well, that free add-on I look at as kind of like a wedge in the door. Because people like that functionality that it has as far as reporting what add-ons were out of date, I mean, the devot:ee Monitor has consistently been downloaded a gazillion times. It's the same thing with the Lamplighter add-on, people are downloading it and installing it and you don't have to do anything else beyond that to get glimpse of how out of date your add-ons are for your site. It's already installed so if you decide that you want to kick it up a notch and see all your sites in one spot and add your commit info in analytics, et cetera, et cetera, basically you can get an account and then just start "registering" by using the key to these sites with your Lamplighter account.

Emily Lewis: Did you ever think about just leaving it as the devot:ee Monitor, basically a functionality, leaving it a free add-on and moving onto something else? Like what made you decide to like really sell this as a service?
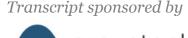
Ryan Masuga: I think there's definitely something here that solves a pain.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And like I said, we're still trying to find our perfect product market fit.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: We're in what's known as the "Trough of Sorrow" where we're kind of like China.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: You know, the excitement of launching is done, and now we're kind of moving fast and shifting based on feedback from people that are paying us to use it, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: It's like, "Oh, I hadn't thought of that, or gee, this is broken, or this should work this way." And so we're still trying to figure that out. But the idea of how would we get recompensed for this time, we are sharing it, and so it's solving a pain to a degree that people are paying us for it. It's a great vote of confidence when someone signs up for an annual plan.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: It's like, "Wow! They're basically betting on us for the next 12 months to keep developing this into something that is going to be ever more useful for them.

Lea Alcantara: So speaking of that, how did you determine your pricing model?

Ryan Masuga: That's a shifting thing. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: One thing I've learned from reading SaaS, Software as a Service, articles and blogs is that experimentation is huge. Anyone who's running a SaaS site is probably treating you like an experimental, like Pavlov's dogs, like A-B testing going on. There's all different kind of stuff that moves around, automated emails and the pricing can be different based on country you're logging in from. It can be very different. So our pricing has been shifted around just based on what we thought.

If a company has ten people and they're putting 200 sites in here, their average revenues could probably cover $80 a month, it would be nothing with that sort of thing.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: But we're still playing with it. We're constantly saying, "Hey, with the features we have now, maybe we can shift the prices around, but two months from now, we're going to have this new feature which we might only put on a higher plan. We'll keep the prices the same and see if that works and maybe shift pricing if no one is going for it." It's kind of like fishing, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Interesting.

Ryan Masuga: You're just putting different bait on the line and just seeing who bites.

Emily Lewis: So why follow this particular model, like a subscription-based model? Am I correct in that sort of the basis of SaaS, it's subscription-based pricing?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah. I look at it like I alluded to a little bit ago. Just imagine, you spent 500 hours building something, let's say, and we could have just built this for ourselves and been done.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: And I would have been in the hole for 500 hours essentially for development and my time and everything that could have been billable client work, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: I never would see that 500 hours again and neither is the team, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: So we could spend essentially not a minute more and also going to have 500 people, let's say, paying us an average of $30 a month to use it, well, $1,500 a month sounds a lot better than zero, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right, right.

Ryan Masuga: And that definitely helps fund it to make it better for us.

Emily Lewis: Well, let's talk about that a little bit in terms of making it better for you as the owner/developer. So is it a matter of you guys really get to make a commitment to something and you just work with it and constantly evolve it which hearing it out loud sounds kind of satisfying as a developer?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah. We have three main revenue streams here. We've got the client work, devot:ee, which is a marketplace, and then Lamplighter. So it's certainly the most rewarding in that it's our own baby. The marketplace is difficult because you need to acquire sellers and acquire buyers, and we're just the middleman there, and so if either one of those things gets out of whack, what can we do about it really? We're selling other people's scripts for other people's CMS.

We're just the middleman, and the client work is just that, you're only sort of doing like retainer work if you're lucking out and only working an hour in a $500-a-month retainer. You're just trading your time for money there, whereas this, we're in full control of how it's built, how it's marketed and it's enormously satisfying when someone signs up. I mean, I have a special text message that pops up.
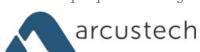
Lea Alcantara: Oh!

Ryan Masuga: And I jump through the roof when that happens. It's like, "Wow! Someone thought enough to go for it."

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: And especially when those signups are for annual, it's like, "Wow! This person sees enough value in it." And that kind of validates the work you've put into it.

Emily Lewis: What about a SaaS model benefits the customer?

Ryan Masuga: We're only working on one thing. When we improve something for one person, you're improving it for everybody. So everyone who's providing feedback is basically helping everyone else out. It's a kind of nice that way. It's not limited to some small add-on, niched add-on somewhere, or a client site that only affects that client. You're helping more people I think doing the same amount of coding you might do on a private website.

Emily Lewis: I'm curious, Ryan, and in this I guess to a degree applies to devot:ee, do you get involved in these services/products with any expectation of it helping build your base client services as part of your business, or support your reputation, or is there any part of it that is tied to that in a big picture way?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, devot:ee definitely have a role in our perception as ExpressionEngine experts. If you could say you're the person who wrote the book on something, it's like, "Oh, those are the people who run the marketplace so they must be good." So that's allowed us to raise our rate and project a better and more professional image when it comes to the client work that's done in EE. I haven't really thought about that with Lamplighter so much.

I mean, it's nice to be able to say and maybe use it as a case study at some point that, "Hey, we concepted and built this whole application in something that was outside of our initial wheelhouse of skills. We tackled something entirely new and it was successful in that sort of thing." But I think because our client work is mostly EE that devot:ee has a larger like direct role influencing maybe someone's decision to use over someone else.

Lea Alcantara: So I'm just curious, you've kind of touched a little bit on it in terms of like experimenting with how you're positioning Lamplighter and who your market is, so how have you been marketing Lamplighter? How are you trying to get people to know that it exist in the first place?

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Ryan Masuga: Yeah, not enough. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: I am not skilled in marketing. I'm a natural introvert. I'd like going to conferences and that sort of thing and networking, but it wears me out, I'm done.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So I can't be out there pounding away and saying, "This is the greatest thing ever," even if it is because it's just not within me to do that. Hopefully at some point I can hire maybe a salesperson or something to…

Emily Lewis: Hype man.

Ryan Masuga: A hype man, a hype woman. I need someone.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: So I definitely have not spent the amount of time I think we probably should and marketing it. With our client work, I don't know how people have found us. We've never really formally advertised until a couple of months ago. So with Lamplighter, I'd say the extent of our

marketing so far has been some ads we threw together and put on devot:ee, and then the actual add-on itself because people might install and just use it and be like, "What's this logo down here? What does this mean?" Then they click through and say like, "Oh, there's a service here."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Okay. Have you done any stuff with Google? I feel like Google AdWords is one of the places Software as a Service people test out phrases and markets and what are people clicking on.

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, yeah. I haven't done any of that, and I know I need to get into like retargeting, because that's really worked well for the guy who runs Baremetrics, which is a stats and analytics for your Stripe account for SaaS products.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Okay.

Ryan Masuga: And we use this by logging into it every day and look and it gives me an idea of how much monthly recurring revenue we have and all kinds of metrics. He's used the retargeting to a great success, and these are things I know I need to do, but again there are so only so many hours in the day for me to do stuff and if I'm coding an EE site over here, then I can't be doing this and I can't be doing that. It's just there's a lot to learn so I'm wondering maybe it make sense to have a part time person or a junior person who's into this sort of thing do that, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: I'm not sure when that point is.

Lea Alcantara: Even if you don't know when that point is, it seems like you still have ideas over what you should be doing, even if you're not doing it. Do you have like a written plan?

Ryan Masuga: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Or do you have a to-do list?

Ryan Masuga: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: As in like do Google AdWords, you know? [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, I probably have about as much plan as I did when I quit my web job a number of years and started this company.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Because my wife thought I was insane because I had no business plan.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: So she made me write a business plan so that she could read it, which is actually a good exercise. I do have like a bullet list of things I know I need to do for marketing that I've gathered from reading other people who are running successful SaaS businesses. What is success when it comes to this too, like how do I know when it's working?

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: I have a number in my head how many customers we'd like to have and we're not there, but should we have been there by now? I don't know.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: Should we be there by the end of the year? I don't know. So success is kind of a matter of whether your personal reality and trajectory match your expectations.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So in some way I do think we've been successful because we have barely marketed it, and we have four figures in monthly recurring revenue right now.

Lea Alcantara: Nice.

Ryan Masuga: So that to me says something.

Emily Lewis: Well, and I think it also says something that to a degree parallels client services work where sometimes you just need to launch. You need to put something out there. You can iterate over time later like Lea mentioned, like if you're not doing it, do you at least have a list? And I feel like we have dozens of lists of things that we will do someday.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: [Laughs] Right.

Emily Lewis: But they're very active. We've just got to do what we can do right now and let's not wait until we have the time to do the rest of it.

Ryan Masuga: It's definitely true, especially in SaaS. That's like move fast, break stuff, iterate. Someone said where they call it shiterating. It's shit…

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: It's shit and iterate. Just shiterate all over the place.

Lea Alcantara: That's amazing.

Ryan Masuga: In some ways, that's right. Let's get this thing out there. Like the current look of our app, I'll admit like I dislike it immensely.
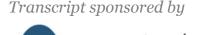
Lea Alcantara: Interesting.

Ryan Masuga: We've got a complete redesign that I cannot wait to get out the door that feels a lot more app-like in that sort of thing, and it's like when do we decide to do that? And we had edited an entire backups feature or so we thought. We looked at it again and we're like, "You know, this is crap. It's just not good. It's not going to scale well." It's not going to serve people well, so we're starting over. We don't want to launch that and then iterate to a completely revamped backup system, we're just not going to launch the backup system as written, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: Some things are probably a little bit more intertwined in the inner workings of the site rather than just maybe visual presentation or some features are way deeper than others. So it's something you do want to be careful and make sure you're launching it correctly, but others definitely can be worked on over time like the timeline. There's definitely extra things I want to do with that timeline because I think that that thing is a really cool great idea, but we just launched with some basics for right now that we thought would be useful.

Emily Lewis: So actually I think that's a nice segueway to talk about the nitty-gritty of designing and developing Lamplighter itself. So what was your role with the actual design and development, or were you the idea man?

Ryan Masuga: More ideas in this one. This is probably the least hands-on project I've ever been involved with. I've done almost no coding myself other than breaking some front-end views now and then as I tried to learn the templating language.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: And it's been mostly just feedback role and the question guy like, "Should this be here? You know, this doesn't make sense here, why don't we do it this way" type thing. But the actual nitty-gritty, I mean, I've looked at the code base. When it comes to like actual Laravel which is what Lamplighter is built on, my experience with it is next to nothing.

Emily Lewis: Did you choose Laravel because that was something you felt was a good foundation or your team already have the experience, or what was the decision process there?

Ryan Masuga: I think it was the fact that it's just like harped on by PHP devs everywhere as the second coming of PHP, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: So I was like, "Hey, that sounds good, and if the guys here are on board with that and want to use it and think it's smart, I'll listen to why we should use it, and if it sounds good, then, heck, let's go for it."

Lea Alcantara: Just to take a step back, you were kind of mentioning how you're not that pleased with the UI of the current system right now in that you're looking forward to the revamped redesign.

That makes me wonder how you do approach the user experience in the UI of a Software as a Service. What were your priorities?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, right now we know we're on boarding just Lows. When you get into the app, it's like, "Good luck, sucker."

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay. [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: I'm like, "What do I do when I log in?" Like in some ways I feel like when I get the text message of who signed up, that on hand, I'm like, "Yes," and the second hand, I'm like, "Hey, you poor soul. You're just going to be lost. I feel horrible."
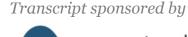
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: So we really looked at like what you see when you first log in to help you.
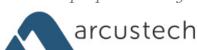
Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: Because once you set up a couple, it's like, "Oh God, I get this." But just kind of a lot to set up initially. It's not as easy as something like Baremetrics that I mentioned earlier which is literally you just turn it on and all of a sudden it just read your Stripe stuff and calculates a bunch of numbers for you, and boom, you're done. With this, you've got to install the add-on. If you want to hook up your commits, you've got to link up over Repo. You've got to link up your analytics. It's not as easy to get hooked up.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: But I think someone or a team gets invested in doing that and starts seeing the value come back out of that because all this information is in one place that it's worth it to them, but trying to get it off the ground floor, I don't think we've done a good enough job. It's not clear enough where certain things are. I read where the Pinterest guy, the guy who runs that creates an account every week.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Ryan Masuga: So that he knows what it feels like to be a user of the app.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And that's one thing I want to strive for here, which I can't do the way it's built now, but I would love to just create an account as if I'm someone who's going to sign up just so I know exactly what page I get on when I'm there.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: What happens next? What happens if I don't add a site for the first thing? What happens if I do this? Just try to play dumb just to see what other people are seeing so that we can say, "Hey, we've got to fix this. We've got to fix that." Because user friendly is where it's at.

Lea Alcantara: So it sounds like all your testing seems to be mostly internal and in your actual users. Do you ever do any sort of "Let's get a bunch of people in a room or like online in Skype and get them to test," and you just watch them?

Ryan Masuga: We've not done that so much, but we do use Intercom. I don't know if you're familiar with that. It's a way to kind of see what your users are doing in real time kind of thing.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: Interesting.

Ryan Masuga: So that's running on Lamplighter, so it allows me to very easily target specific people. Like we have a branding that you can do right now, which we are thinking of ditching. So I go into Intercom and I see everyone who's using branding and I just send them an in-app message, "Hey, is the branding that important to you because I'm thinking of doing that?"

Emily Lewis: That's awesome.

Ryan Masuga: And then you get your feedback and it tracks how many or what percent of people responded to you and yada, yada, yada. You can send them emails through Intercom or in-app messages so the next time they log in, they may get a little message saying, "Hey, I'd love to talk to you because I know that you're in California and you don't use branding and you're on an annual plan and you've got five people on your team."

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: It really helps you target certain people to talk to. So we've asked certain people to kind of look at certain features sometimes, but no formal testing like, "Hey, let's get 30 people and see how this works."
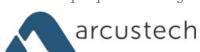
Emily Lewis: What about the development cycle for Lamplighter. How has it been different from like a client-based project?

Ryan Masuga: With client stuff, you've got someone breathing down your neck and if you've got to get it done by next Tuesday, it's going to get done by next Tuesday or you're in trouble.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: You can say the same thing about your own stuff, but Tuesday turns into Wednesday, Wednesday turns into, you know.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: I'm sure you guys with your recent rebrand, you're trying to play your own clients, you'd actually get it out the door because you can tweak stuff forever. It's the same thing.

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Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: In some ways that's how Lamplighter has been, we can just kind of tweak forever, and you've just got to tell yourself, "Just launch it with whatever it is you're working on." So we haven't had any kind of formal cycles other than just like that feeling of panic attack in your stomach like, "We've got to get something out the door here."

Emily Lewis: Do you ever do anything similar to like we often see with content management systems where there's like a roadmap and you – I don't know – maybe don't hit all the points on the roadmap, but you still launch, or do you hold back until you've hit all the checkmarks of what you wanted to do with the next iteration and the next thing you're going to put out?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, on the Lamplighter site, we have a forecast page because we always thought that that was kind of cool in places. At least it told you what was in dev or what they are thinking about or what they did, so you can see some kind of thought process, some sort of transparency as to what's going on. That has changed based on client feedback though.

Lea Alcantara: Oh, interesting.

Ryan Masuga: Because we think certain things are important, but then you get feedback and you realize, "Oh, this other deal is way more important to people."

Emily Lewis: Is that one of those things where is it better just to not have the roadmap out there, or to just update it on the fly as things come?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, we're keeping it out there and it's not a super detailed one, so it's not like we're saying, "Yeah, the Drupal module is going to be here in October." It's just, "Drupal module, this is what it would do, and we're considering it. That we would talk about this."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: And so if someone could see that, "Hey, look, they've considered Drupal there."

Emily Lewis: That actually brings up another question for me, how do you decide or how you choosing CMSs to integrate with? Is it you have to figure out how to tie into them in some way, into their back end?

Ryan Masuga: Right.

Emily Lewis: Or do you have to get permission from the people who own it? I mean, and is WordPress even owned? I see that Lamplighter works with WordPress like, how does that work?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, well, we started with EE just because that's what we're most familiar with and we knew how to get the information out of EE. Craft was kind of born out of the EE ecosystem because Pixel & Tonic made EE add-ons and then they developed their own CMS. So we're working with Craft, and they're supposed to get some kind of centralized add-on thing together and when that

happens, the Craft add-on will be more useful than it is now, and then we just want to look for scale beyond those two because those two together can fit on the head of a pin when it comes to CMS market share.

So who's big? WordPress, and it was really relatively easy to make an add-on for it. So what else is out there? There's Drupal. There's Perch. There's all different kinds of stuff. We're kind of waiting to see what people want rather than thinking that Drupal needs to be the next thing. We actually had a woman, I can't remember her name. She's one half of the team that does Perch who wrote me in to say, "Hey, if you ever want to integrate Perch, then let me know, we'd be happy to work with you." Because why wouldn't some service want to tie in with their thing and we can put their logo on the website too, and this is like we're advertising for them. So yeah, we're taking it slow and just kind of adding what we know or what people are asking for.

The other one that we're getting a number of requests for and we're not quite sure how to tie in is Statamic. They were supposed to have some kind of centralized add-on store or something too, so if we could tie in with that to know if your Statamic add-ons are out of date, that would be useful. So yeah, we're definitely considering that as well, and that's the thing with these monitoring sites. We found that they're all one-trick ponies. They all deal with this CMS or that CMS or this CMS and we're just trying to say, "Why can't we just kind of tie in with whatever you use because web apps use different tools?"

Lea Alcantara: So we've been talking a lot about the design and development and running a business. I want to talk about customers now.

Ryan Masuga: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Customer service for Software as a Service, how do you tackle it?

Ryan Masuga: I think Intercom has been great. It's been really useful because it makes us seem really smart because it's like, "I know exactly who you are and how you're using this so I can ask you…

Emily Lewis: It's a very targeted messaging.

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, it's very cool, and the other thing it does is auto email. I can't remember the term off the top of my head. It's like life cycle emails. So I have a couple that I've written that are in Intercom. So if someone signs up, they immediately get an email, an in-app message, and then I think it's after two days if they have not added a site yet, I ask them if they need any help. But if they have added a site, I ask them if it was easy and can I help you do anything else, or did you check out our notes feature and that sort of thing, and then you can go in and if someone hasn't been in the app for 30 days, send them an email asking if they need any help with the app or if we can do anything for you.

So getting those kind of intelligent messages out there to people I think has been huge because people really respond to those things, "I've noticed you signed up for a team account and you haven't added anyone yet, are you having trouble adding other team members?" And these messages are going out while we sleep kind of thing. It's just automatic. You just kind of think of what someone might need help with and write kind of a personalized message and then set that up to go out on different triggers basically.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So that's been great and it really feels like we're on top of that rather than just being reactive, but then again if someone emails you, get back with them as quickly as possible.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: That is just so important.

Lea Alcantara: So what are the most common challenges that your customers have?

Ryan Masuga: I think we kind of built stuff too quickly in some ways, so there's a lot of exceptions and bugs that we're hammering out. So right now we're kind of trying to stabilize the app a bit so we're using something called Bugsnag which is tied into the app too, and whenever there is an exception or something with Laravel, it sends us a note in our Slack app. We use Slack here for internal messaging and it sends us an email, so we're seeing where errors are occurring right now, and it's funny because like an error will occur and then like 20 minutes later, you may get an email from clients saying, "Hey, I just had this error." We're like, "We're already on it, and we're already fixing it." But I think outside of that, it's the lack of direction and help when you're in the app, especially in the areas that you have hooked up the app. Like if you haven't, like, "Yeah, I want to see my commits, my team's commits in the timeline now. So where do I go to add my GitHub repo credentials and stuff? Hmm, I'm a little lost, you know?"

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And so that's what we've tried to address in the revamps, it's making it a lot easier to see where you go to add these settings.

Emily Lewis: Has that affected any decisions about documentation or user guide?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, we had a big discussion about that like, "How do you document your own app?" We have an ad out now for a PHP dev to come in who will be working on Lamplighter for all its

client stuff, and I want to give them something that says, "Don't just have them look at the repo and comb through the code for three days trying to figure out what's going on. Give them something that says, 'This is what happens when someone signs in. These are the current jobs that run, and this is why." It's like the story about your app.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: I'd love to know like how these other companies that have these massive like Pinterest or whoever, if they're on-boarding someone internally, how do they get them up to speed?
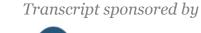
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So our big thing here for one is commenting the code. Just comment the crap out of it, because you can go in a couple of weeks later not realize or remember why you did something.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So let alone a new person coming in having to work on a section of the site, wondering what this function does. So yeah, we've had pretty big discussions on good ways to document internally and style guides too with a front-end person is coming on, like how do they know what button to use or what style they can use for a form input. There's a lot to know and a lot to keep track of in addition to just making sure the thing is continuing to run for the people who are using it, because that's another different set you'll probably bring up between an application like this in, let's say, a marketplace is if someone is having a problem with a purchase in the store on a marketplace, yeah, that's a problem, but it's not as bad as someone not being able to log in at 2 a.m. on a Saturday, if they want to, to their application to see what their team is up to, like we've got to keep this thing up and running.

Emily Lewis: Does that mean you or someone on the team is always on call?

Ryan Masuga: In a way. [Laughs] I guess I'm always on call. It's not like written down anywhere, but that's one reason that's nice to have that Bugsnag because I get a text message or something if something goes wrong with the app and that sort of thing.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: But yeah, there are other ways probably just to track that stuff that I need to research because it's going to be a problem. It's one thing now with the amount of clients we have, and I love them dearly, but if we had tens of thousands of clients like that would be a monster to stay on top of, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Ryan Masuga: I'd love to have that problem, don't get me wrong.

Lea Alcantara: Well, that makes me wonder then, do you have any internal or even public guarantees of customer service like you said it's really, really important to email them right away if there's a crisis, but what are the standards?   You say, "Okay, if this person has a crisis on Saturday evening, who deals with it, and how fast do you deal with it?"

Ryan Masuga: No comment.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, and I mean, these are things that come up. You put kind of a boilerplate privacy policy and terms page in place and then a new feature, that can change those things, or if you add Google Analytics, you have to add a whole Google Analytics privacy chunk to your privacy. It's

like, "Okay, now we have people using the app and they need to be guaranteed that it's up for so long. How do we codify that? How do we say that?"

Lea Alcantara: How do you guarantee it?

Ryan Masuga: How do we guarantee that, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Ryan Masuga: And how can you break that up to maybe make it worth more on a higher plan?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Ryan Masuga: Hey, maybe on the business plan, we give you a phone number that other people don't get because I don't want you paying any less than a $100 a month if you're going to call me at 3 a.m.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: But if you can bet I wake up at 3 a.m. if you're paying me that much per month.

Emily Lewis: So what's the biggest mistake you've learned from with Lamplighter?

Ryan Masuga: Biggest mistake…

Emily Lewis: Or if you want, challenge. [Laughs]

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Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, it's something known as the "long, slow SaaS ramp of death."

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: And we're on it. You have like a runway, like either you're bootstrapping yourself or you're getting someone to give you a chunk of money like easy funding to do something, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Ryan Masuga: If we didn't have devot:ee and the client work, Lamplighter would be tough to get off the ground because it is slow.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: We do require customers, but it's extremely slow, so maybe I'd have to say I was probably naïve a little bit, because I'm thinking, "Yeah, all we need is a thousand customers at $30 a month and we're rich!" You know?

Emily Lewis: Right. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: A thousand customers really, dude? I mean, that's just ridiculously hard. A hundred customers is hard, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: Because in SaaS you've got what's known as churn, which is those folks that leave, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: You've got new people coming on, you've got people leaving for different reasons too, so it's not like someone signs up and you have them forever.

Emily Lewis: So do you have any pieces of advice you could offer someone who kind of wants to follow a model like this, build a product, sell it on a subscription-based model?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah, one, don't do the thousand-customer mistake because apparently I'm not the only one that's done that because it's an easy number to multiply by and it's very deceptive.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: It's tough to do, but I would say determine what your success would be, which I probably need to do as soon as we're done talking.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: If you have something that you feel like you can charge someone $20 a month for, what would it be worth your time if you can only spend part time on this, or if you're going to spend full time on this? Like is it a hundred people, is it a thousand people, what works for you? What's successful for you? Probably too, I've heard other people say this, don't charge any less than like $15 a month for something.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: Because would you rather have your income determined by like a thousand people paying $15 or a few people paying $300 a month, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: I'd rather have those $300-customers any day because a lot of times the lower end people too, lower end plan people, I don't want to say lower end people like they're subhuman or anything.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: But it can be very needy.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: Because they're not as sure that they need what you're offering them as someone who says, "Yeah, I'm going to plunk down $250 a month for you because this is what I need and I know you're going to help me out and be more of a partner in a way than just a service."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And read up on it. If don't know anything about SaaS, there is a ton to learn. There's a bunch of smart people out there that have great blogs and Patrick McKenzie, he's @patio11 on Twitter, Jason Cohen, Jason Lemkin, these guys know a bunch of stuff and it's endless. But it's also very encouraging, you can be a one-person show and do very well if you are solving a problem for people. There are a lot of terms to learn, LTV, churn, MRR, ARR, ARPU, and the list goes on.

Emily Lewis: Acronyms.

Ryan Masuga: Acronyms for… huh!

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: But they make sense after a while if you follow these people and read their stuff, and again, it's very encouraging. It lets you know that, "Hey, it might take a while, and it might be tough, but if you're solving a problem for someone, the other part of the challenge is finding enough someones who know about you, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And I think that's going to be our next step is just making sure people know we even exist.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: I am just finding it troublesome to even know if I was going to use AdWords, what terms to use.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Ryan Masuga: If I put site monitoring in, is that what we're doing or are we managing sites, or like what are we doing? We're not exactly Pingdom. We're not just telling you if you're up or not.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: It's just like who else is doing what we're doing. Well, we're finding a few places that cater to WordPress and a few that cater to Drupal, and we're just looking at what keywords they use and how do they show up in the search because that's the closest thing that there is to what we are right now. So anyway, read a lot and try and figure out what your success would be in your mind so you don't constantly feel like you're a failure. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Actually, this makes me wonder if this makes you feel more sympathetic to your client site work because generally speaking, we design websites for those people who run a business or they have an app and you're just doing the UI for them or something like that, and sometimes even the marketing site for their app or something. Do you feel like it has gained you more perspective?

Ryan Masuga: In regards to…

Lea Alcantara: Well, in regards to the fact that now you're going through these business struggles and you're going through these items and trying to figure out what is the priority for this software and, let's say, the UI and development items. Does that improve your ideas when you're being approached to create a website because now you've got this business acumen in the background?

Ryan Masuga: I think it's helped me understand some of our client's requests.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: And realizing you are only a part of a puzzle that they're trying to juggle because sometimes you'd feel like I'm the web guy and I'm doing their website, but their website is only part of what they do. They might have a brick and mortar store. They might have a completely separate business, and they've got payroll and client people whoever they're dealing with, and you're only one part of the puzzle, so you don't want to monopolize their time, but it also helps you understand when they are coming to you with a request, what's important.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: Like, "No, we're not going to do that Carousel, and here's why."

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: You know?

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: I'm going to save you time and money because I know what I'm doing.

Emily Lewis: So before we let you go, can you give our listeners an update on devot:ee? Recently, I saw that you closed the forums, for example, which was pretty short after launching them.

Ryan Masuga: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Like why?

Ryan Masuga: Yeah. Well, it became obvious very quickly that we were filling a need that didn't need filling.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: No one was using them and the spam started coming in.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And so I started cleaning up spam, so it was pretty simple, do I want to clean up spam on forums no one is using or do I want to spend that time on Lamplighter?
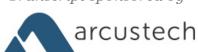
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: Done, you know.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Ryan Masuga: If there's one thing that Lamplighter has helped me determine too is like to make decisions quicker. Look, I'm not going to let these just be out there just to feel like devot:ee is bigger and adding stuff. No one is using them, let's just get rid of them. It's the same thing with the weekly articles. I had done those for like a 126 weeks on devot:ee and even longer than that, almost four years' worth in a row I think on EE Insider, and then I just stopped doing those a couple of weeks ago too because they just aren't as many add-ons coming in so it just seemed less useful.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Ryan Masuga: So we'll stick with devot:ee, but it's not what it's used to be. It's obvious to me the ExpressionEngine ecosystem has changed, which only reinforces to us that we need to not put all of our eggs in one basket.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: So having our own product is more exciting that way because we're more in control of market ticks and downturn or whatever. We're not beholden to anyone else's ecosystem really.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: And yes, Lamplighter ties in with ExpressionEngine, but not only ExpressionEngine.

Emily Lewis: So with devot:ee turning five this year, what would you say your top lesson from the experience has been?

Ryan Masuga: Marketplaces are less stable than I thought, and Jason Cohen who I mentioned earlier gave a talk at MicroConf called *Designing the Ideal Bootstrapped Business*, and that's on Vimeo. I've watched it twice. It's really good, and in it he argues that a marketplace is probably the worst because you're the person in the middle.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: And I see the reality of that after a number of years. We have to acquire the buyers and the sellers, and if either of those fall out of balance, we suffer.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: We have no real way to do, like what can we do? Like we can't just have a sale. We're taking a small cut anyway. That's another mistake. I should have done this with the industry standard at 30%. We went with the 20% to try and be the good guy, you know?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: It's almost impossible to go up from there. So didn't ever had any room to do sales or any kind of real promotions because after fees and stuff, I mean, if someone is buying one or two add-ons per order, in some cases, depending on those costs, I mean, we're practically paying the people to buy add-ons.

Emily Lewis: That's a hard lesson I suppose.

Ryan Masuga: It is.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: I just wish I had done or we had done something like Lamplighter sooner.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Ryan Masuga: It took a while for that light bulb to come on.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, but I've had those feelings all the time about my business or even the podcast, "We should do this. We should have done this. We should have done that." But you only have what you have in a given moment, you know?

Ryan Masuga: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: You only have the expertise or the knowledge or the time or the money.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Emily Lewis: I mean, the resources. Those are the ones that are killers, your time, money and resources. When that's not there, you don't have a choice, you just have to. Like if you're having a hard year in a client services industry, then you're having a hard year, you can't think beyond that, you have to just get through that year.

Ryan Masuga: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: Well, let's not end on a bad note. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Let's not.

Lea Alcantara: Let's talk about like what's new on the horizon.

Ryan Masuga: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Let's talk about what's going on, like what's coming up for devot:ee, Lamplighter, you.

Ryan Masuga: Well, devot:ee, we're going to try and do some things to help sales a little bit with devs who have add-ons that have been out there for years and they're offering support on add-ons

that are ancient, so we're working with a couple of developers now to offer different ways to create kind of more of a recurring revenue for their add-ons, so that's kind of cool. But our future is really in Lamplighter I think for long term. I see that as just being a viable thing to work on and it can be every bit as profitable, if not, more than devot:ee ever has been, and we're doing some gangbuster amount of client work right now. We're getting a lot of great leads and lot of fun-looking stuff coming in, so we're hiring. So for us, it's going to be Lamplighter, client work, and devot:ee going forward as far as we can see unless Lamplighter blows up where we don't need to do the other things.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: Then I don't think I'd argue with that either.

Lea Alcantara: Interesting. So before we finish up, we've got our rapid fire ten questions, so our listeners can get to know you a bit better.

Ryan Masuga: Okay.

Lea Alcantara: Are you ready?

Ryan Masuga: I am as ready as I'll ever be.

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Lea Alcantara: All right, so Question 1, Mac OS or Windows?

Ryan Masuga: Mac.

Emily Lewis: What is your favorite mobile app?

Ryan Masuga: Lift app.

Emily Lewis: Is that like a workout app?

Ryan Masuga: No, it just keeps track of anything you want to keep track of so it helps me stay on my head. That's like exercising every day or drinking enough water.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: Oh, cool. So what is your least favorite thing about social media?

Ryan Masuga: How it monopolizes your time without your realizing it.

Emily Lewis: What profession other than yours would you like to attempt?

Ryan Masuga: I think I'd like to go back to my first love of painting, to being an artist.

Lea Alcantara: Oh wow. So what profession would you not like to do?

Ryan Masuga: Anything in sales.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: It is just not me.

Emily Lewis: Who is the web professional you admire the most?

Ryan Masuga: Oh, man, is there a time limit on these questions?

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Ryan Masuga: The web professional I admire the most? I think Zeldman. He's done a lot of good for everybody.

Lea Alcantara: What music do you like to code to?

Ryan Masuga: I am all over the place, Spotify is constantly doing something for me, some weird ambient stuff is good.

Emily Lewis: What's your secret talent?

Ryan Masuga: I play guitar pretty well.

Lea Alcantara: What's the most recent book you've read?

Ryan Masuga: I am currently in *A Storm of Swords*, the third of *The Game of Thrones*.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: *The Game of Thrones*.

Ryan Masuga: Yeah. Good stuff.

Emily Lewis: Lastly, *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*?

Ryan Masuga: *Star Wars*.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs] Hey, that was very definitive.
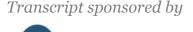
Ryan Masuga: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: That's all the time we have for today. Thanks for joining us, Ryan.

Ryan Masuga: Thanks for having me. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

Emily Lewis: In case our listeners want to follow up with you, where can they find you online?

Ryan Masuga: Most frequently on Twitter, and it's just @masuga.

Emily Lewis: Awesome, thanks Ryan. It was so great to talk with you.

Ryan Masuga: Thanks again.

[Music starts]

Lea Alcantara: We'd now like to thank our major sponsor for this podcast, Pixel & Tonic.

Emily Lewis: We also want to thank our partners, Arcustech, Devot:ee and EE Insider.

Lea Alcantara: And thanks to our listeners for tuning in! If you want to know more about CTRL+CLICK, make sure you follow us on Twitter @ctrlclickcast or visit our website, ctrlclickcast.com.

Emily Lewis: Don't forget to tune in to our next episode when we're talking to Blue State Digital's Aisha Satterwhite about technology for social good. Be sure to check out our schedule on our site, ctrlclickcast.com/schedule for more upcoming topics.

Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara …

Emily Lewis: And Emily Lewis …

Lea Alcantara: Signing off for CTRL+CLICK CAST. See you next time!

Emily Lewis: Cheers!

[Music stops]

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