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CTRL+CLICK CAST #051 – Intermediate Perch: Runway, Shop & More with Phil Smith

[Music]

Lea Alcantara: From [Bright Umbrella](#), this is CTRL+CLICK CAST! We inspect the web for you! Today we are talking about the Perch CMS with special guest, Phil Smith. 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: It's been far too long since we've talked about Perch, and even in that episode, we really just got an introduction to the CMS. So today, we're taking a deeper dive into some Perch features and development, including e-commerce with (Perch) Shop, and serving as our guide today is Phil Smith. Phil is an expert in Perch, but is also familiar with other systems like ExpressionEngine and WordPress. He's also the co-director and founder of [amillionmonkeys](#), a small web shop based on Brighton. Welcome to the show, Phil.

Phil Smith: Hey, there.

Lea Alcantara: So Phil, can you tell our listeners a bit more about yourself.

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The logo for Bright Umbrella features a pink umbrella icon to the left of the word 'Bright' in a large, bold, black font. Below 'Bright' is the word 'UMBRELLA' in a smaller, all-caps, black font.



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Phil Smith: Yeah, so I'm based in Brighton here in the UK where it's always sunny. I'm by the sea and there's a beach and it's great, and I run a small agency. I'm married. I've got two kids. I drink coffee and beer.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: I watch football or soccer as you probably call that, and that's me.

Emily Lewis: So where did you get the name amillionmonkeys?

Phil Smith: Oh yeah, this is the killer question.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: So there's a thing called the infinite monkey theorem or the a million monkey theorem as it's sometimes called, which is the idea that if you sit a million monkeys in front of a million typewriters, eventually they'll come up with a work of Shakespeare.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: And I kind of started building websites and it wasn't very good, but I kind of had the theory that actually if I had enough time, then I'll be able to do something decent.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Phil Smith: And so the infinite monkey theorem came into play.

Lea Alcantara: That's perfect. I love it. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



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Phil Smith: There you go. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: So how long have you been running that agency?

Phil Smith: I used to work for a charity, so to kind of supplement my income. I did web stuff on the side and I did that for about ten years and that kind of grew. The clichéd story I did it for me and he told somebody else and so forth.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: And then it started to get really busy in 2012, and healthily at the start of 2013, I was made redundant for my job, and so it just kind of made sense that I actually I should probably do this full time.

Emily Lewis: Wow!

Phil Smith: And so we moved in with my wife's parents, which was interesting for a year of the business.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: And then we were making enough income to actually buy a house and live in Brighton again, and yeah, it's going really well so far.

Emily Lewis: Nice. So was your first project involving a content management system? When did you start working with content management systems?

Phil Smith: Yeah, so at first, it was just websites for friends. So I probably didn't use content management systems that much and it was way, way back, I mean, some people booked kind of early 2000 maybe. So content management systems weren't quite as good and Flash was still very



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popular as well. So it was a lot of kind of me updating sites for friends and things like that, but when I started to kind of worked with friends of friends of friends, then actually content management systems became more important. So from about 2005 to 2010, I was quite heavily using WordPress and since then, things have kind of moved on a little.

Emily Lewis: So you don't use much WordPress these days?

Phil Smith: I don't so much. A lot of these sites I worked on in the early days with pretty basic, and I wasn't quite as particular about my kind of workflow and ethos, whereas now I'm a bit further along and work with bigger clients, and WordPress just doesn't seem the right fit anymore.

Emily Lewis: So I mentioned that you had used ExpressionEngine as well as Perch. Are there any other CMSs you've dabbled in?

Phil Smith: Now, I do. Around about half or maybe less than half of my work, maybe a third to half of my work is developing web apps, and so it's a little bit more involved, so I do quite a lot of work in Laravel as well, which is a kind of MVC.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Phil Smith: And part of my relationship with ExpressionEngine was I used to use CodeIgniter, which is the platform that ExpressionEngine was built on.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Phil Smith: I've kind of stopped using CodeIgniter and simultaneously stopped using ExpressionEngine as well.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



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Lea Alcantara: Is that when you started dabbling or taking a look at other solutions like Perch?

Phil Smith: Yeah, ExpressionEngine has been on a funny journey over the years, and it seems to be settling down a bit now, but kind of around about 2013 or '14 maybe, ExpressionEngine was really quite unstable and there were quite a few bugs and no one was quite sure where it was going or where CodeIgniter was going for that.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Phil Smith: So at that point, I kind of jumped ship and looked at some other alternative, and Perch was a good solution for me because I was really just starting to grow as an agency.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Phil Smith: And Perch has kind of taken a similar path to me in that on those smaller projects, Perch was working great, and as I've grown and amillionmonkeys has grown, Perch Runway has kind of been born, and actually it's working great for bigger projects now.

Emily Lewis: You know, before we dive into stuff like Runway, I think it was the same time that you mentioned on 2013 or so that Lea and I always knew we were going to continue using ExpressionEngine because we're just very adept at it, so we can get a lot done with it these days, but it really that sort of unknown factor that was going on at that time really encouraged us to take a look at other tools, and I think that we talked about it in other episodes, it's a reflection of a developer who's really looking for the right solution rather a developer who's adoring a piece of software.

Phil Smith: Yeah, and I think I don't want to work on lots of different CMSs all the time as well.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



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Phil Smith: Like Perch, I've been working with really every day now for four or five years and I know it really, really well.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Phil Smith: And the thought of changing now, it's like, "Oh, what would I do? I'd hate to start."

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: If Perch went under, which is not going to, thankfully, I'm sure I'll be fine, but it would be like a little bit scary to start again with a new CMS. I think I would get back to ExpressionEngine again and pick up where I left off.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Phil Smith: But yeah, I don't want to be doing multiple things. I've just been approached by a client and asked specific of, "You need to use WordPress," and I'm kind of like, "Oh man." I really want to do the project because it's a nice client and they've got a really good eye for design. I think it's going to be a fun project. But the thought of using WordPress again, I'm now like, "Oh man, this isn't going to be fun."

Emily Lewis: So what appeals to you most about Perch?

Phil Smith: People who had used ExpressionEngine are all Craft for that matter. It's quite similar in that it's really all about the structured content. That's the thing that really appeals to me. When I was working in WordPress, it was all about just you give the client a WYSIWYG editor and they can whack



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whatever they like in that, or you kind of hack WordPress and install more stuff in order that you can add different post types or add new fields or things like that.

With Perch, it's all about actually making sure what is stored in the database is a kind of structured format, and then you can, if you're clever enough or gifted enough or know PHP, you can do whatever you like with that essentially. You can build an app that's on top of that content, if you wish, or on a more basic level, you can just pass that content in a template. So on a really basic level, it's so easy to use, but still gives you the structured content, and then if you need to do more advanced functionality on top actually, you can kind of switch mode and say, "Actually, instead of just using the default template, just give me the data and I'll do something clever way on top of it." It's very structured and it's really adaptable to different project, and if halfway through a project, I'm thinking, "Actually, it would be really nice if we could this crazy thing with this content. Actually, it makes that really easy."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Phil Smith: As someone who likes to kind of push the boundaries of what a website could look like, that's really appealing to me.

Emily Lewis: When you were first learning Perch, what was the most challenging thing about picking it up?

Phil Smith: Although I had kind of dabbled and done a few websites with ExpressionEngine, I think the big jump for people who exclusively work in WordPress I guess would be – you'd love this example, it's getting this idea of actually templating and actually the content sits in a structured format



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and is displayed in a template rather than actually WordPress just kind of spews out the content and it's quite difficult to handle.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

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Phil Smith: So I think that's the big thing for people who only work exclusively in WordPress, which with a lot of those people actually, you just need to get your head around this idea that actually content is stored and displayed in a different way.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, like real content management as opposed to spewing content. [Laughs] I love it.

Phil Smith: Yeah, yeah, and I think in the early days as well, what I found what I kind of spent hours crafting these sites that looked great, and by the time I had put them on my portfolio, which because with small businesses, it's quite important, they already started to look heinous because they could change their phone number to Brighton if they wanted to.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] Right.

Phil Smith: And I don't want my clients to do that, and I'm quite open with clients now about saying that, "So this is why I'm not giving you a WYSIWYG editor at every opportunity because actually I and my colleagues do know quite a lot about it and actually you need to trust us with this."

Emily Lewis: I think that's a good point. It's not related to a content management systems specifically, but just in terms of workflow and taking the time to educate the clients about if they made this investment, they hired you for a specific design, that you want them to support that long term



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because that's the investment they made, not necessarily the ability to put Comic Sans in and pink everywhere.

Phil Smith: Yeah, absolutely, and a few years ago or a couple of years ago, I read a Mike Monteiro book, *Design is a Job*, and that really inspired me about having confidence and going, "Actually, you are paying us to make design decisions, do not now take that out of our hands." I have been quite kind of firm about that.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, absolutely. I just feel like as an aside when you're thinking about just content management systems in general and choosing the right one, I feel like there's a bit of an irony that a lot of clients, while there is that brand recognition of WordPress, but they have this impression that it's like, "Oh, it's like super easy to use and everything," but really it's like you're conforming to the WordPress standard versus WordPress confirming to your professional standards, and I feel like that's why after you've been developing websites for so long, you're like, "Oh, there's got to be a better way. There's got to be a CMS that actually outputs what you wanted." [Laughs]

Phil Smith: Yeah, when I stated to get more involved in kind of the industry and felt more strongly about structured content, I think of that as well, I found myself like always using things like advanced custom fields in WordPress, which some people may be familiar with, and always trying to make WordPress do what I wanted to do, so trying to make it work like kind of a larger CMS like ExpressionEngine or Perch Runway or something like that, and it just got ridiculous at the end. It was like, "Why am I doing that?" I also used to use Drupal quite extensively as well, and I found the exact same thing with that, and I knew it quite well, but I still found myself going through a painful process setting up Drupal every time. That kind of brings me on to another thing that has really I find great about Perch in that it's so fast. It just feels lightning fast in comparison to Drupal, and I'm sure there



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are wizards out there who make Drupal uber quick, but actually the way that Perch templating system works, it just makes that time to first bite, it just makes it so quick in my experience. I never found that with Drupal. It felt like with Drupal actually you needed to do quite a lot to make it work, and by the time you've done that or actually the time to first bite it, I had really taken a hit.

Emily Lewis: That's a good point. So when it comes to choosing Perch, let's just talk firstly about just Perch straight out of the box, the CMS, what kind of sites is that best for?

Phil Smith: So Perch is great for smaller sites where there is some kind of structured content. To be honest, if someone came to me and said, "I just want a blog and maybe an About page," I probably would still go back to WordPress. For anything bigger than that, Perch works great because, yeah, you haven't decided yet on your structured content. So for things like if you're doing a kind of basic portfolio site where you've got client and maybe they're a photographer and they have one page and they want 50 photos on it or something like that and they wanted it to be a light box and the usual kind of shop window website, Perch is great for that because you can just build the site in HTML and then you can really quickly convert that into a content managed site.

So we've done a site for a management services in London and my partner built all the HTML and CSS and JavaScript and then handed it over to me, and in the course of a train journey between here and London, it's about like two hours, I managed to convert the entire thing to Perch and then handed it over to the client because it's just so easy because the Perch templating system, it just kind of looks like HTML with a few extra perks, and actually once you know those, you can really quickly and easily convert that over.

Emily Lewis: So when would you not use the Perch CMS, instead do something more custom with, well, actually before you go into that, let's talk what is Perch Runway.



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Phil Smith: That's a really good question. So Perch Runway, I think probably came out about a year ago now or certainly maybe October last year. So a basic Perch is still based on the kind of standard file structure, so you have file called index.php and you create editable regions in there and then you assign those regions to templates. If you want to make a new page, Perch can help, but you're still actually creating a new file so that could be called contact.php. With Perch Runway, there's routing built into it. So instead of actually having physical files, when you go into the CMS, it just creates new routes to the database, so you might type in /contact in your browser, but there is no actual file called "contact." Perch does all the magic of actually recognizing what you've typed in and serving the right data from the database. So that's the main difference. There are some other differences on top like there are some performance enhancements because Perch Runway is really for bigger sites, so it works better with Cloud storage and with if you use Varnish for caching and things like that, it works slightly better there, but that's the main difference there. It's got its routing layer on top much like ExpressionEngine and Craft has.

Emily Lewis: So Runway is when just Perch CMS basic is just not enough?

Phil Smith: Yeah, exactly. I think we've all had that feeling. Well, so many people who have used Perch have actually this site that's just a little bit too big for Perch, and early on, there were a few projects where actually the reason I was using ExpressionEngine was because actually things would just a little bit too big for Perch, and I knew the client was going to be adding lots of new pages, whereas actually Perch Runway makes that super easy. The client just clicks on that new page and selects a template and they're away.

Emily Lewis: So can you describe a little bit about the kind of project you would use Runway for or maybe like a real client that you built something a little more powerful, a little custom?



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Phil Smith: Yeah, so a project that we just finished work on is for the Sussex Wildlife Trust. That's a local kind of nature charity down here, and that was ideal for Runway because it was a big site. I mean, it's got at least a thousand pages because they do all kinds of work in schools and they are nature reserves and they raise funds and do lots of other activities and they've got six different blogs for each of the different nature reserves. It's a very complex thing, and so those bigger sites, Perch Runway is ideal because you don't have to think about, "Actually, I've got all these different files," but you just have to worry about the CMS and the CMS manages everything for you.

Lea Alcantara: Interesting. Did you consider any other CMSs for a project like this?

Phil Smith: This kind of goes back to my earlier point really in that I now know Perch so well that I'm sure the site could have been built with Craft or ExpressionEngine, but I would have to have learned all over again, and I just didn't fancy doing so.

Emily Lewis: So there was really a learning curve with Runway?

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Phil Smith: Well, I think because I had used ExpressionEngine before, I understood it was a fairly simple transition between the two. There are some things that I have learned on top, so, I've never done anything with Varnish before. I'm now starting to get my head around that because that was a feature that hasn't really been available to me before. I mean, the documentation is great. One of the great things about Perch is Drew (McLellan) and Rachel (Andrew), who are the guys behind it, really I have no idea where they find the time, but they do all the support as well as write the software, and there's this whole support community, so I often chip in on the forums, but actually if you put



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something on the forum, then chances are Drew or Rachel will come back on and say, “Actually, this is how you do this, or read this, or look at this tutorial.”

So the learning curve, there is a learning curve, but actually there are plenty of support on that learning curve to kind of help you out. We started using Slack quite heavily as well, and that’s quite a lot of fun because you get people. It’s not really for like support issues, but kind of sort of community chat of, “Actually, wouldn’t it be great if you could do this in Perch or does anyone have any ideas about this?” So that’s really a nice community developing as well.

Lea Alcantara: So what would you say is the most surprising thing about Runway when you were starting to experiment? Okay, it’s more powerful, but what powerful thing did you experiment with?

Phil Smith: So let me think of some of those fun things. So one of the nice things about Perch, as I mentioned before, is if you’ve got a little bit of experience in PHP, and I’m by no means an amazing developer, if you’ve got a little bit of experience, instead of just kind of using the templating system, you can kind of hijack it and do clever things.

So a nice example of this is on the Sussex Wildlife Trust site that we’ve just done, there forum home page and you can type in your post code, and so that’s like your zip code, and press Enter and it puts out like a little form and what it would do then is instead of displaying all the nature reserves, a list of all the nature reserves and all the events, actually we kind of hijacked the process and we get the data that would be presented in those templates and then we do some kind of geolocation magic and the resort them based on your distance to those nature reserves or those events, and it’s really easy because of how Perch works in that you don’t have to use a template.



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If you don't want to, you can just get the data and then you can do clever things with it. So that's a nice example. Another thing that we've done, this is kind of about Perch generally rather than Perch Runway, is because of how the templating system works, you don't necessarily have to display as HTML, so we've done some projects where we presented the data from the template in JSON file and used JavaScript templating to present that content, which has been great in terms of performance because we've worked on portfolio sites and I don't want to loading 50 images as soon as someone gets on the page.

If it's only 50 big images, what I wanted to do is load exactly what I need to load and then lazy load it off as it's required, and actually Perch has made that process really easy. So a lot of their benefits about Perch are about performance, so actually you can really reduce down the load times on processes that would otherwise take a lot longer. So the example I just gave, instead of presenting lots of images on the page, you can use JSON or do with the clever things by just having the data from the template as an array or as a JSON file or however you like.

Emily Lewis: Nice, so let's make a bit of a shift to talk a little bit more about another not feature, but another thing that is powerful with Perch which is the Shop. Is that an add-on or is that a separate product?

Phil Smith: Yeah, so Perch has a series of first-party add-ons, so Drew and Rachel have built a hosts of add-ons, which is great because you don't have this dependence on third-party add-ons as well, but don't get me wrong, I used to love ExpressionEngine and it's great, but I found myself using Structure. I used Structure on every single project, and I kind of thought, "Actually, if Structure went away or something happens to Structure or I had a kind of version conflict or something like that, that would have been a world of pain." Whereas with Perch, actually the add-ons are all first-party add-



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ons, so Drew and Rachel developed them so you're always know they're not going to go away. You're never going to have any conflicts.

Yeah, Shop is one of their new add-ons that they have developed, and it's in advanced beta stages now, and myself and a few other people are using it in production, and it's working great. I mean, a year ago, if you asked me, I kind of have a rule of, well, it wasn't a rule, but it was almost a rule of "I don't want to do e-commerce sites because they're just a world of pain," and every project takes twice as long if it's got e-commerce bolted on because there were so many complexities and all the security stuff and all the payment gateway stuff, and hopefully Perch is going to take all our pain away.

Emily Lewis: So let's first talk about why you are using a beta product for production.

Phil Smith: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Were you just comfortable doing that with a client? Did you have to advise the client about it?

Phil Smith: Yeah, the client is aware. The client had a relatively limited budget and actually a relatively basic requirement set, so we'll talk about some of the details of Perch Shop shortly, but of the kind of cool features of you put a product in a basket and you check out, all of those features are there already, and yeah, I have just about know the program and experience that actually I could enhance the beta to do exactly what I needed it to do, and it's working fine. I mean, they have been using it for months now and there have been a few old teething pains, but it's been great and it's such a better alternative than the thought of using WooCommerce or something else. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: We're in a situation right now with a client who wants to add e-commerce to her Craft-driven site, and Craft Commerce is around the corner, and so we had talked to her about it and I



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normally would never mention or I would never consider developing with a brand new add-on or product or anything. I just don't do that stuff. I really liked to have it get tested by a lot of other people who find the problems, but I felt like it was something we could bring to her because we trust the developers of Craft so much, and I felt that if there were problems, the developer was going to fix them. Do you feel like that was part of your reason for going with Shop for a production site?

Phil Smith: Yeah, absolutely, and exactly at the same time that I was looking, this client came to me and I pitched for the work, the guys at Perch were starting to talk about the Shop Beta, and I spoke to Drew and Rachel and said, "Look, what do you think? This is my requirement set. Do you think we could do this in time?" And as you know, Drew is an amazing developer and he said, "Yeah, I think we probably can," and they did and yeah, it's all fine. So yeah, they've been great in where they have been specific bugs in the Shop Beta, they've dealt with them really quickly. Actually, they've got quite a lot of feedback from me in the Beta process of, "Actually, this does work, this doesn't work, and we need to fix this." So it's been a great process. I mean, I hope they'd say it's been helpful as well because hopefully I've provided some good feedback to them and they've provided a great service for me too.

Lea Alcantara: So let's talk a little bit more about those features that you kind of hinted about because as we already mentioned, there are so many different types of e-commerce options out there, and one is better for another project or another client. So what's different or special about Perch Shop, like what kind of features does it offer?

Phil Smith: Well, the first thing to understand about Perch Shop is it sits on top of some software called Moltin, which is an API dedicated to commerce, so it's a great API and a great product, but it's dedicated. So the guys behind Moltin really know their stuff about commerce and they're constantly



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developing it, and the add-on just essentially integrates Moltin to Perch so you've got all these amazing functionality of a proper, well-built commerce API inside Perch. So it's not just Drew and Rachel sitting and building a commerce plugin, which I think would terrify me, there's a dozen or so developers building Moltin, and actually, Drew and Rachel's job has been actually integrating this into Perch.

So if you look at the Moltin spec, then actually they are the things that you will find within Perch Shop, so that's all the things you'd expect like products and variations on products and modifiers on products, so if you've got tee-shirts of different sizes that cost different amounts, and brands as well, physical products and digital products and all the kind of admin stuff like inventory and stock and discounts are in there as well. Yeah, so everything you'd kind of expect to find on a proper kind of commerce operation, all those things are either available or will be available when Perch Shop launches.

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Emily Lewis: Yeah, I'm looking at the Moltin site right now. Yeah, it's a very robust. So if Shop is as robust as Moltin can be or will be, does it feel like more than you need for simple e-commerce or is it easy to just sort of pick and choose the parts you need based on the project you're working on?

Phil Smith: Well, probably a great thing about Perch overall is the way it can kind of grow with your projects. So this is really nice. I mean, this is harping back to the previous conversation, but it is a really nice way to upgrade from Perch to Perch Runway if you kind of realize actually your sites are growing, and that would be the same with all the Shop features that actually the options are there to add modifiers, but actually, for example, my client has no interest in modifiers or variations, and I've



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not actually told them that they can do discounts yet, so it's just kind of tucked away and one day I'll present it to them and they'll be amazed.

So yeah, the thing about Perch, I mean, you've guys have seen it, is that the UI for the CMS itself is really simple, and for Shop, it's broken down really carefully so there's a section to manage products and there's a section to manage orders and there's a section to manage members, which is like customers essentially. So this kind of that separation of different areas of content is great for clients because it means the person who's sending out the tee-shirts, they don't have to worry about customers or turnover. All they need to see is actually, "Here's an order, let's change it to shipped."

Emily Lewis: And in terms of getting all of that set up, I've set up a handful of e-commerce projects with different ExpressionEngine add-ons, all of which to their own level of complexity and pain, [laughs] so like when you're setting up the rules for shipping or setting up the rules for taxes, that's typically stuff I get the info from my clients and then I set it up in the CMS. Is Shop easy to get those things set up?

Phil Smith: Yeah, so let's think about specific. So I think tax certainly is, I mean, you may be aware of this, there are quite a lot of changes coming to how tax is handled in the EU later this year, and Rachel, in particular, knows everything about this, as in Rachel Andrew is behind it, and they're really committed to actually making Perch Shop work with the new VAT rules, and yeah, it's really easy to add tax rates because that's just part of their API so there's a part in the CMS to add tax rates and they're just sent off and similarly custom shipping as well, that's easy to set up and you can do things, I mean, I think I haven't implemented this yet, but you can get product's weight and set shipping cost up based on weight, and it's done.



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So yeah, it certainly feels very comprehensive, and it's kind of growing. The Beta is now off to Version 11 and each time a new Beta comes out, "All my life you can do this as well. This is great." So yeah, it's just kind of growing and getting better. Just in terms of cost as well, the add-on itself, it's completely free as all Perch add-ons are, so that's great. So the only cost incurred is the charge of using the Moltin API and you get something ridiculous like 50,000 API calls free, and if you do go over 50,000 API calls, you can probably afford to pay a small subscription fee. [Laughs] And harking back to this kind of Perch performance thing, actually Perch has a lot of caching of data sent by Moltin, so it's not like everything you do has 25 API calls. That Perch is really efficient at only making the call when necessary. So yeah, we've been online for about a month now with the Shop and we are nowhere near our API call limit, and yeah, they're selling quite a few products, so yeah, it's completely affordable, which is great.

Lea Alcantara: I'm a little shocked that it's free. [Laughs]

Phil Smith: Yeah, all Perch first-party add-ons are free, so that's kind of how Perch is. Well, actually, it's great because it means we've all had that feeling halfway through our project where the spec has changed slightly and you're like, "Oh no, I'm going to have to go back and say they need to fork out another X amount." You just don't have that with Perch because generally the things that you really need are free of charge, so that's great.

Emily Lewis: So we weren't planning on talking about this, but you've mentioned a couple of times Perch and performance, and I'm just curious because based on, at least, my ExpressionEngine experience, in order for me to ensure that a template is going to render quickly and the database calls are efficient and all that other stuff, I need to make sure I'm building my queries a certain way, I need to set up extra caching features in different pages, I may even need to install an add-on if I need to



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take it further. Is it like that with Perch or Perch just processes something differently so that it's more performance?

Phil Smith: So there's a great blog post that they've written about this, and I'll send you a link to it, but how the Perch templating system works is slightly different in that they kind of breaks down the HTML that's sent to the browser throughout the load process, so the browser is getting more data earlier, which is obviously a good thing. So it does work slightly differently to all the templating languages like Twig where it's actually quite difficult to send data earlier on in the process. Yes, for people who are interested, I'll send you a link and maybe you can put that in the show notes.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, absolutely. It's very interesting. We need to do more of Perch. I've only done it with kind of internal messing around, just making sure I'm familiar with it. We haven't put it in any sort of production environment, but I love the way it's built. I love how familiar the language is because it's tag based, it just looks really familiar to me as a front-end developer.

Phil Smith: And Drew and Rachel, before they were doing Perch, were doing client stuff for years, so they understand my issues and the problems I had with clients and all those kind of stresses that I have, they understand them and you'd feel that as you're kind of playing with Perch that actually they understand that clients aren't very good at using CMSs or clients are impatient because of how the CMS itself is structured.

Emily Lewis: Well, and even the way you were describing support and documentation, it just sounds like they care about developers because they are developers, and so they're trying to lower the barrier of entry in a really comfortable way.



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Phil Smith: Yeah, the barrier for entry on Perch, it's so ridiculously low. It feels incredible. Like in terms of the process with WordPress when I was building sites in WordPress, I would never dream of building a site in HTML and then converting it to WordPress. I'd always have some kind of starter theme and work backwards, whereas with Perch Basic and in fact with Runway, you just build your site with HTML and you can make it super quick and you can use whatever JavaScript libraries you want and then just kind of embed Perch and replace your HTML with Perch tags and it all works magically. It's such an easy process, and the tutorials on the Perch site are great as well. They're really helping you buzz through the process.

One thing to mention with Perch Runway as well is they've got a developer license, so if you're using Perch Runway, if you are on a personal project or I'm not exactly sure of the criteria, but if you want to kind of try it out, there is a developer license, which you can use and it's on a lower fee than the standard Perch Runway license.

Emily Lewis: Excellent. So you mentioned the tutorials are really good. Are there any other resources that they just come to mind that would be really great to share with someone who is either looking into Perch CMS or they want to check out Runway or Shop?

Phil Smith: So at the minute, there aren't that many. I think I'm about to start a site. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: So hopefully by the time this goes out, I'll may be send you a link and that will hopefully have bookmarks to lots of other Perch-related, because lots of people are blogging about it because it's a great CMS, but there's actually nowhere which is kind of pulling those links and resources together.



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Emily Lewis: Like a center or repository.

Phil Smith: Yeah, exactly, so I think I'm going to do that, and then I'll send you the link.

Emily Lewis: Please do, that would be great.

Lea Alcantara: But otherwise, I guess like the Perch first-party documentation and all their videos and their forums are probably the best bet here.

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Phil Smith: Yeah, absolutely. They've got loads of code examples as well and there are a few sites that are on GitHub which are released, like the 24ways.org's site. Quite a lot of your listeners I guess will want it. That's built with Perch, and I'm sure I'm right in saying this that it's all on GitHub, so if you want to go have a look around of how have they done 24ways with Perch, you can just go and look.

Lea Alcantara: Oh.

Emily Lewis: Nice. Yeah, they seem to really love developers. [Laughs] I kind of like it. It's very developer-centric, yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Because they are. [Laughs]

Phil Smith: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Yeah, like I said, they kind of understand the issues and it's not like people disconnected sometimes because they do all the support as well. I guess Drew and Rachel hear it firsthand all the struggles that people are having and if they can amend the CMS so that there are a fewer support issues, then that's great for them. So they're going to do everything they can to make it really easy and a great experience for clients and developers alike.



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Lea Alcantara: Okay, Phil, well, thanks for coming on our show and giving us a rundown about Runway.

Phil Smith: My pleasure.

Lea Alcantara: I really wanted to say that.

Phil Smith: Yeah, you've been building up for that. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: I sensed that.

Lea Alcantara: But before we finish up, we've got our Rapid Fire Ten Questions, so our listeners can get to know you a bit better. Are you ready?

Phil Smith: Let's do it.

Lea Alcantara: Okay, first question, Android or iOS?

Phil Smith: It's iOS.

Emily Lewis: If you are stranded on a desert island and can only bring three things, what would you bring?

Phil Smith: Things or people?

Emily Lewis: Well, you can interpret it any way you want. [Laughs]

Phil Smith: Okay, yeah, my wife and two children to keep me company, and I'd ask one of them to carry my phone for me and keep my phone on as well.



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Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs] What is your favorite TV show?

Phil Smith: Yeah, I quite like *Homeland* and it's about to start again or in a couple of months down, so let's *Homeland*.

Lea Alcantara: Nice.

Emily Lewis: What's your favorite dessert?

Phil Smith: Sticky toffee pudding. Do you have that?

Emily Lewis: Mmm!

Lea Alcantara: Mmmm.

Emily Lewis: I know it. Yeah, yeah, it's good. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

Phil Smith: In my early days, I used to DJ and I'd love that if I'm going back to being a DJ.

Emily Lewis: What profession would you not like to try?

Phil Smith: I commute into London about once a week, so that's like an hour and a half or two hours away, and I hate the idea of having to do that every single day.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Phil Smith: I work from the loft in our house, and my commute to work involves two flights of stairs.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



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Phil Smith: So I'm quite happy with that, and the thought of getting into a train every day, no thanks.

Emily Lewis: Yeah. I'm with you there. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: What's the latest article or blog post you've read?

Phil Smith: There's a great article on A List Apart, which I read this morning. Let me just get it. Oh, it's about the Language of Modular Design, which I actually heard this lady give a talk at a Responsive Day Out a couple of months ago.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Phil Smith: And this article kind of accompanies that, so I'll send you a link. It's a great article about kind of how you do atomic design in the real world.

Emily Lewis: Cool. If you could have a super power, what it would be?

Phil Smith: To make my children sleep definitely.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: I have two boys, one of them is two and one is four.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Oh man.

Phil Smith: Yeah, the two-year-old has a good habit of waking up at 5 in the morning.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

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Lea Alcantara: Lovely. What music do you like to work to?

Phil Smith: I used to DJ, as I say, and I've just got into listening to like house music again. When I work, I'm in particular for those who are into the dance music movement like Chicago house which is quite nice, but essentially, anything that I can't sing along to. I hate it when you're kind of working, but you know the words to the song, I just can't do that.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: All right, last question, cats or dogs?

Phil Smith: Oh, can I say neither.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Phil Smith: I'm not a pet-perfect bloke.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Fair enough.

Phil Smith: So I'm really sorry if you both are, so sorry about that.

Lea Alcantara: No, it's all good, it's all good. That's all the time we have for today. Thanks for joining us.

Phil Smith: My pleasure. My pleasure. My pleasure.

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

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Phil Smith: Yeah, so I tweet [@monkeyphil](#) and I have a blog which is [monkeyphil.co](#), which is just kind of stuff being there. It's relatively new, but it's about owning a small design agency, and so that's me.

Emily Lewis: Thanks again, Phil. This was a really great conversation, and I'm really glad that we finally got some more Perch content on the show.

Phil Smith: Yeah, it's been great, and if anyone has any specific questions about Perch, tweet me and I'll gladly respond.

[Music starts]

Emily Lewis: Wonderful.

Lea Alcantara: CTRL+CLICK is produced by [Bright Umbrella](#), a web services agency obsessed with happy clients. Today's podcast would not be possible without the support of this episode's sponsor! Thank you, [Visual Chefs](#).

Emily Lewis: We'd also like 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](#). And if you liked this episode, please give us a review on [iTunes](#), [Stitcher](#) or both!

Emily Lewis: Don't forget to tune in to our next episode when Travis Gertz returns to the show to talk about his web-based wireframes LiveWires. Be sure to check out our schedule on our site, [ctrlclickcast.com/schedule](#) for more upcoming topics.

Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara ...

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Emily Lewis: And Emily Lewis ...

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

Emily Lewis: Cheers!

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