SPI 255

Deep Work
with Cal Newport

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Pat:	This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, session number 255. De de de de de deep deep deep.
Announcer:	Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast, where it's all about working hard now, so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now your host—you can see him air boxing to fire himself up before speaking in public—Pat Flynn.
Pat :	Hey, hey. What's up, everybody? Welcome to March 1st for those of you who are listening to this when this come out. Thank you so much for listening in. This really cool because a lot of great things happening right now.
	For one, I actually just released, or re-released, if you want to think about it that way, my brand-new course, Smart from Scratch, which you can find at smartfromscratch.com. What's really cool is actually I tested this course back in October of 2016. Now we've refined it. We've made it even better. We've collected a lot of feedback. Now it's open to the public once again at smartfromscratch.com. The doors will close again at some point, but that's going to be opening and closing throughout the year. If you don't get it now, that's cool. If you want to get in early now, that's cool too. You can check it out, smartfromscratch.com. That's really exciting.
	More than that right now, I'm really excited to introduce this next guest to you. This person is somebody who I highly respect right now. I've been reading his books. To get him on the show is just such an honor. It was actually quite hard to get him on the show, because he's so busy with other things. He's very, very diligent with where he spends his time.
	Speaking of time, March of this year is themed on SPI as the productivity month. By that, it is going to be more of a research month on how we can be the most productive people possible. Why is this important? How do we get into those modes when we are doing just incredible work and amazing output from the input that we put into the time that we spend doing things? On the podcast this month, you're going to hear from a number of people who have

productivity as their expertise. It starts today with Cal Newport, the author of the recent book, Deep Work.

Oh man, this was a great interview, very, very, very actionable advice. Really interesting angles on why Cal does certain things and just his journey about writing books and how he documented his life and what he's learned throughout these books. It was also really interesting, too. I look forward to sharing this with you and also the rest of the amazing content we have for you this month, too. Why don't you sit back, relax, and listen up. This is Cal Newport, author of Deep Work. Here we go.

What's up, everybody? I'm so happy and honored to welcome Cal Newport to the SPI podcast today. Cal, thank you so much for being here today.

Cal: Sure, Pat. Thanks for having me on.

Pat :   Absolutely. I don't know if you know this, Cal, but your book and amongst a few others have been passed around as the books to read in the entrepreneur space. For a while, it was the One Thing and then it was Essentialism and lately it's been Deep Work. We've been featuring it in book clubs. It was actually the book of the month for my audience, for my book club in November of 2016. It's just, again, such an honor to have you here. I think all of us can relate to living in this busy, distracted world and trying to get the things that we want done, but just having a really hard time doing it. There was no better person that I could think of to come on and help up through these struggles than yourself.

Cal: Sure, I appreciate that, Pat. I don't think I can really take much credit. I think the timing was just right. I was lucky that I was talking about something at a time that people were really ready to hear it.

Pat :   Absolutely. You are also very humble, obviously. Thank you for that. I'm curious. Going back into your history, at what point in your life did you really start to get serious about actually being productive? I think for a lot of us, it's certain moments in our lives, or events that

might happen. For you, was there a specific moment when you just started to get really serious about your input versus output?

Cal: Yeah, very specific actually. It would be the fall of my sophomore year at college. This is actually what started me on my career as being a writer as well, wanting to write a book about my experience getting more productive in college.

Basically, what happened is before college, I had been an entrepreneur in the first dot com boom. This was the Netscape, web then 1990s, that original dot com boom. I had a company. I was used to business books. "Hey, you want to do marketing better? Let's get a book about how to do marketing." "You need to have more sales. Let's get a book about sales."

I get to college. I'm there. I'm doing okay, but I don't really know how to do it. I'm staying up late. I'm doing the typical college thing. Saying used to this from the entrepreneurial, I was like, "Let me go get a book. Let me go figure out a book about how to be productive at college. I'm paying these student loans. Let's figure it out." There was nothing there.

I set out on this process of self-experimentation. I took one semester and said, "I'm going crack this." I ran experiment after experiment on how I took notes, on how I studied, on how I read, on how I scheduled my time. The result of it was I went from an A-B student to getting a 4.0 in every semester starting in that sophomore fall all the way to when I graduated. That was when I had this epiphany moment, like, "Oh, my God." How you do work, your organizational habits, these type of systems can have a huge impact on your success. I was a convert from that point forward.

Pat :   I see. You actually wrote a book called How to Become a Straight A Student, which was published in 2006, which I think is really interesting. Correct me if I'm wrong, but that's not necessarily all about how to get straight As, but it's essentially how to actually win in college. Can you explain a little bit more about the origin of that book specifically?

Cal: I wanted to share my experience with other people, because I couldn't find that book. That's what drove me to actually do these experiments myself. Essentially what I did is I said, "I don't want to just write about my own habits. Let me go interview 50 straight A students." To me, it seemed like a simple idea, but it was new in the publishing industry at the time. I said, "I'll just go find 50 students who do really well in school, like I did, and who don't seem like they're just grinding it out." They don't seem exhausted, the all-nighter-type approach. I just interviewed them.

I distilled the common ideas from how they managed their time, how they took notes, how they studied, how they wrote papers I put in to a book. It seems obvious, but there was no book like that out there at the time. Everything on the college bookshelf back in the mid- 2000s and late 1990s was very much trying to be fun, and funny, and cool, and not too serious. You didn't want to scare off the student reader, the publishing industry thought if you were being too serious. I just thumbed my nose at that and just called the book How to Be a Straight A Student, like the opposite of what people were doing in the industry.

I'll tell you, that book sells as well today, a decade later as it did when it first came out. It's a simple idea, but there's a hungry audience for it. Like, "Hey, I'm in school. I have loans. How do I study? How do I get return on this investment?" Turns out it's not so hard.

Pat :   What's a really quick piece of advice you could give related to that? I actually have a lot of high school students who listen to the show who are probably chomping at the bit now. Just give us one thing that we can use to help us. What would that be?

Cal: When it comes to studying, active recall is the whole ball game. Active recall is where you try to reproduce the information you need out loud, without looking at your notes, as if you were lecturing a classroom. If you can do that, you know the material. Reading it, doing passive recall, reading your notes, reading the highlighted textbook, waste of time. You might as well just play a video game.

If you study people who get really high grades at the college level, active recall, active recall is the whole thing. It's very time effective. It's cognitively demanding, but it's very time effective and it's incredibly useful. You do active recall on your material, you'll know it. It won't take too long to learn it. Almost anything else is not worth doing.

Pat :   I love that. You had mentioned, "Almost as if you were teaching it." That's actually something that I did in college to do very well. I actually got groups together in all the different classes I was in. We would each try to teach each other the stuff. Instead of just reading it out loud, like you said, we were actually actively recalling it with this pressure of actually people learning from us at the same time combined, it worked out really well for me, too. That's a fantastic piece of advice. Thank you for that, Cal.

Later on in life, you published a book that I know a lot of people have heard of before and that is So Good They Can't Ignore You. Before we get into Deep Work, I'd love to know more about that book, So Good They Can't Ignore You. What does that mean exactly, and who is this for?

Cal: Yeah, I wrote that book right around the time I was transitioning out of grad school and into the world of work. I felt if there is any time in my life I need to understand an answer to the question, how do people end up loving what they do for a living, that was the most important time. I was trying to make this decision. Am I going to go into academia? It was possible that I was going to do the first and last job interviews of my life. I figured, I'm going to get the most leverage from having an answer to that question at this one point in my life.

Because I'd written some books before, I had the luxury of not just thinking about it myself, but actually writing the book on the topic. I figured that would help me get more access to people if I was not just trying to answer that question for myself. That's all that book was about. If you study people who love what they do and if you look at the scientific research on workplace satisfaction, what

works? What's important?

Basically, the headline that got me in some trouble is that the most common piece of advice out there, which is follow your passion, can actually be damaging advice. It can actually reduce the probability that you're going to end up passionate about your work.

Pat :   Yeah, I agree with that. Now we're growing up in terms of who this kind of content is for. For those who are exiting college at this point in time, listening to this, what's once piece of advice you could give to them, so that they can give themselves the best chance to actually succeed in the world out there?

Cal: If you study people who end passionate about their work, what you find is maybe eight out of 10 cases. They don't start with a preexisting passion, which they identify and then use that as the foundation of their work decisions. Instead, passion is the side effect. It comes later by them, instead, choosing something that seems interesting and then working hard to get really good at it. That's my best advice. If you want to maximize the chance that you're going to end up passionate, don't obsess too much about finding the perfect job. There's many different jobs, or pursuits that can lead you to passion. The key is once you've chosen something that has that possibility, put your head down, get as good as possible as quickly as possible, satisfaction, motivation, and then passion almost always build on a foundation of skill.

Pat :   How do you balance that for somebody who might have a ton of interests and they just can't pick one and go with it? Obviously, in order to get great at something, you have to stick with something and commit to it.

I know a lot of people, and this was me back in the day. I would go from project A, get excited about it, and then the honeymoon period ends, and then I get bored, and I move to project B. It's all completely different because I want to try something new. How do you even start to be good at something if you don't even give yourself a chance to commit?

Cal: I think it's important to lower the threshold. The story we've been often told in our culture is that there's one job that you're meant to do. If you get it right, you're going to love it. If you get it wrong, you're going to be screwed. I think this causes a lot of that anxiety. You're like, "I like all of these things. What if I chose the wrong one? I've been doing this for six months. I'm not really loving it. Did I make the wrong choice? Is this not my one true passion?"

My advice is to lower that threshold. The reality is it's not that every job could be a source of passion to you, but you already know the jobs you're not going like. That's not that hard for people to filter out things they know they're going to hate. Once you've narrowed down the list to maybe many things that seem like they're interesting to you and that seem like they would have interesting opportunities, if you did them really well, you might as well throw a dart, or flip a coin. It does not really matter. The satisfaction that's going to come in your life really depends on what you do once you make the choice, not on the choice itself. I'd just lower that threshold. Don't sweat the choice so much, but put a lot more attention on what you do once you make the choice.

Pat : Love that. Thank you for that, Cal. That's huge advice for people out there. I know they're going to really, really be able to move forward with that.

Let's get into Deep Work. I'm curious. Was this just, "I need to write another book. Let me figure out what topic to write about."? What was the origin story behind this, your latest book?

Cal: Basically, my books are bullet points on my timeline. We started with me in college and early grad school, writing books about how to be a successful student. Then I went on to the job market, so I wrote a book about how do you decide what to do with your life and build passion. I became a professor. My next question was, "How do I do this complex knowledge work job really well?" That was the next thing relevant in my life. How do I succeed, in my case, at being a professor?

As I was looking into that, it became clear that the answer was deep work. Not only was it clear for my particular job, which was academia, but the more I looked into it, the more it became clear that it was pretty universally relevant if you wanted to succeed in your career. I said, as I usually do when I come across something like this in my own life, "I think it's time to write a book." Basically, everything I write is going to line up pretty closely with some sort of important decision, or goal, or strategy in my life at the time.

Pat :   I love that. Can you give us any insight on what the next part might be?

Cal: Who knows? We'll see, yeah, following my trends. I have two young boys now, so who knows? Maybe Cal Newport will be writing parenting books, or how to survive on a small amount of sleep books. We'll see.

Pat :   I am a parent, as well, of two kids. I think there is a big demand for that. We'll see. For now, let's focus on Deep Work. What is Deep Work exactly in your opinion?

Cal: Deep Work was a term I defined to describe a very specific activity, which is when you're focusing without distraction, for a long period of time, on a cognitively demanding task. That activity is what I give the shorthand name, deep work, to.

Pat :   This can even be done with two kids? It's almost impossible, it seems like, in my household. I have to work either early in the morning before they wake up, or after they go to bed in order to find time. How can one find time to do this? I'm sure this is one of the most common questions.

Cal: More of the way I think about it is take the time that you're already set aside for doing work, whether it be at an office, or when you have childcare, or if you don't, early in the morning, late at night. Whenever you're doing work, my argument is pushing towards this deep work activity as opposed to the other types of at work activities you can do is disproportionately valuable, at the same

time that it's being essentially disproportionately ignored by our work cultures. I think this is an oversight, that if we correct it can lead a lot more people to be a lot more successful professionally and actually a lot more happy just in the satisfaction they get out of their professional life.

Pat :   What do you mean by it's overlooked in the professional world?

Cal: There's two trends going on that are counteracting each other. Deep Work, I argue, is becoming more valuable right now as the knowledge economy gets more complex and more competitive—the better you are at deep work and the more you prioritize it, the better you'll do.

Yet, the other trend happening right now in our culture is that people are getting worse at it. People are more prone to distraction than before. People's schedules are more fragmented before. A lot of the big trends in the workplace are actually actively hostile to deep work. The rise, for example, of open offices, or constant connection email culture, or always . . . You have these two arrows pointing in opposite directions. Something becoming more valuable at the same time that it's becoming more rare, when I see that, I see opportunity. If you're, for example, an entrepreneur, or a freelancer, or someone who can really control your own life, you have this huge opportunity to be one of the few to cultivate and prioritize the skill. I think it's going to be a huge competitive advantage.

Pat :   It's not necessarily about adding more time to do something and just make that time deep work. It's maybe removing time that you're already spending on surface level work and putting that into deep work. Is that the right way to think about it?

Cal: Right. If you have X number of hours of work to do each week, you want to get your deep to non-deep work ratio probably a lot higher than it is right now.

Pat :   Great. How would one even know? I can imagine. This sounds great in theory, but when actually putting it into practice, where does one

even start with determining what work is valuable and what work is not? I think a lot of people might be confused, or consider, in their mind, that the work that they are doing is "deep work", but it's not. Where does those definitions lie between the two?

Cal: A couple key heuristics that help you assess if a particular pursuit is deep or not. One, it needs to be cognitively demanding. It has to feel like you're really giving it your full attention and your full skill being applied to it. It's something that's really you're pushing your brain to its limit to try to do. You're trying to create something, for example at the limit of your current abilities. Second, a useful heuristic is to step back and ask, "If I hired a bright 21 year-old, right out of college, how long would it take me to train him, or her to do what I'm doing right now?" If the answer is a week, or so, that means what you're doing is probably not deep work.

Pat :   I like that.

Cal: It's something that you're not applying a hard-won skill to produce things at great value. You're doing something that's easily replicatable. The backdrop for thinking about this is this notion that in general, the market is pretty clear. It values things that are rare and valuable. The more rare something is you're doing, the more going to value it. This is why things that are easily replicatable, something that you could train a 21 year-old to do in a week, by definition really aren't going to be creating a ton of value for you, or your company in the marketplace.

Deep work is really . . . this is what I do best. This is my one thing. It's the thing that remained after I did the essentialism screen, if you've read those other books. It's the thing where this is what I'm building up. This is the skill that I stand by. This is my craft. Now my deep work sessions are honing that craft and applying that craft.

Pat :   For your own deep work sessions, maybe at the start of this book, or when you were writing it, what were those deep work sessions like? How did you adjust from the kind of work that you were doing before? What was deep work to you at that time?

Cal: Deep work had been something that had always been around in my professional life, because I came in one of the few fields out there where people still explicitly talk about it. I'm a theoretical computer scientist, which means I essentially prove theorems at a white board for a living. That's one of the few pursuits where when you're training, people still explicitly talk about the ability to concentrate as a tier one skill. "Hey, that guy is the impressive guy in the office. Why? Because look at how long he can stare at that white board and hold the equation in their head."

It was second nature to me, like, "Yeah, this is all that matters." What changed for me when I came time to write this book is that I realized that actually it matters for a lot of other fields as well. This is something that had always been in my life. Though, I'll have to say writing the book, I got a lot better at it. It's something I'd always known about and talked about. There needs to be a lot more fields, other than just a weird theoretical computer scientist, who know about the power of concentration.

Pat : Yeah, no, absolutely. I think we can all understand, all of us listening, just how powerful it is when you get . . . Other ways people describe this is when you're in the zone, or in the groove and you just start to see a lot results from the input that you're putting in there, or a lot of output from the input that you're putting in, which is great.

The hard thing, and you mentioned this in the subtitle, which is, we live in a distracted world, so how does one get into deep work with the world being so distracting? How are you setting those boundaries for yourself?

Cal: It's important especially to recognize that deep work is a skill and not a habit, which is an important distinction. People often get it wrong. People often thing that deep work is a habit like flossing their teeth, something they know how to do, they just need to make more time to do it. The reality is deep work is actually a skill like playing the guitar. It's something that if you don't practice, you're not going to be very good at. I think that is a crucial distinction. What happens is if you don't recognize that, you might experiment some with maybe

putting aside some time to be distraction for your concentrate.

If you haven't been practicing your ability to concentrate deep in the inner sustaining, the intensities of concentration that you can achieve, you'll probably find your initial experiences with deep work to be uncomfortable, and unsatisfying, and not much gets done. If you think about deep work as being a habit, you might draw the wrong conclusion that, "I'm just not wired for it." And give up on it. If you think about it as a skill, you would say, "Yeah, of course this wasn't so effective the first time I tried it. I need the practicing to get better. I'm still new to it." You're much more likely to persist with it.

I would start by saying, "that's a key mindset shift." If you want to harness the true benefits that can come from the ability to concentrate deeply, there's a process involved. You're going to actually have to work at that just like you would increasing your muscle size, or the time in which you run a mile.

Pat :   Yeah, that's a huge distinction. If one were starting from scratch, how would one even begin to practice that? Is that setting aside time, but that gets along more the habit side of things? How would you help somebody get started with little bits of deep work to be able to begin practicing and working that muscle?

Cal: My research seemed to uncover that there's two general categories of training that are both important. I'll give you one example from each of the categories. The first category is active training activities. This is activities that you're trying to actively stretch your ability to concentrate, increase the depth, or increase how much you can sustain it. One example activity under this category would be what I call productive meditation. This is where you take a professional problem, you hold it in your head, you go for a walk. During the walk, you try to keep your attention on that problem just in your head and make progress on it. Just like in mindfulness meditation, if you notice that your attention is starting to wander . . .

Pat :   Yeah, the traffic in your head.

Cal: . . . and the traffic, yeah. Just notice it. Don't judge it, just notice it, bring it back to the problem. If it wanders again, just notice it, bring it back to the problem. Keep trying to go deeper. This turns out to be like pull ups for your brain. If you do this every day for four or five weeks, you'll be amazed by how much better you're able to drown out the traffic and to keep your attention focused on one thing. That's an example of active.

The other category of activities that help you get better at deep work, I call passive training activities. This is more about your cognitive fitness. Just like if you wanted to become a professional athlete, you would also work on your general health, how you ate, how you slept. You would probably not smoke. The same thing is relevant when it comes to setting the lifestyle to be able to concentrate deeply. One of the most important activities you can do here is help break your brain's addiction to novel stimuli that try to break this connection you have that, at the slightest hint of boredom, you pull out a phone, or you pull out a computer screen to quickly switch that boredom. You need to break that addiction in your everyday life in work and outside of work if your brain is later going to be healthy enough to tolerate intense concentration.

Pat :   Does that depend on the kind of work you're doing, how you would stop yourself from getting distracted? I notice that when I wrote my first book, for example, that whenever I'd come to a hard part, or a part that would require a ton of research, I just didn't know how to figure out at that time, I would always open up Facebook. That was my comfort blanket, if you will. I found that when I wrote offline that that was actually the way to stop myself from actually getting distracted in that way. Is it about setting up these self-checks with yourself and these devices? Or even making sure that you're not in an environment where you can get distracted that helps you in that passive way?

Cal: There's the idea and the implementation. One idea that if implemented successfully tends to work well is this notion that you start scheduling when you're going to use distracting services, or sources of stimuli. When's the next time I'm going to look at

Facebook, or email, or the Internet? Until you get to that time, you just have to white knuckle it. You say, "Look, I wrote it down right there. In one hour I get to go on Facebook again. I think I can last an hour." You have a set thing. You hold this at evening as well. Instead of it just being the default when you're home after work that at the slightest hint of boredom, you pull out a thing, you say, "I'm going to put aside some time after dinner to catch up on the MLB trade rumors, or what's going on on Twitter," or something like this. You've set aside the time.

The reason scheduling your distraction helps is because all of the time outside of those scheduled distractions, your brain is still going to crave the quick hit. What you're doing now is you're resisting it by saying, "Yeah, I'll give you that hit, but not for 20 more minutes when I've scheduled the time." That's 20 minutes of your brain practicing being exposed to the desire for stimuli and not giving in.

It's that rejection, or resistance, that over time helps break the Pavlovian cycle so that your brain becomes comfortable with, "Sometimes I'm bored and I don't get the distraction right away and that's okay."

If you have a job that requires you go on those things a lot, then your schedule may never have more than 15 minutes without it. That's fine. Still, every time you have 15 minutes before you log on, that's still 15 minutes of training. That's one simple way just to help your brain break such a strong connection between as soon as I feel the boredom, I get the stimuli.

Pat :   I love that, because it's a way to reward yourself for the work that you do. It's like the cheat days in working out with physical fitness. You're still going to be able to have that cupcake, but it's not until Saturday that you get to do it. Thus, you will work harder during the week. I found that to be really helpful. Actually, it was deep work that made me start to schedule when I'm on Twitter, when I'm on Facebook. It's actually made a huge difference. That's an amazing, actionable tip and one that will help everybody get more productive, I feel. How do you stay productive with two kids?

Cal: I'm very organized about my time is one big part of it. I'm a big believer in intentionality and scheduling. I have, usually, a rough plan for the next month, or two months, which is week by week what's going on. When I get to a week, I sketch out a plan for each day. On this day, I'm tackling this and I'm here, I'm doing this. Here's my meeting. When I get to each day, I make a plan for the day. Here's a time I have free, the time when there's childcare, the time when I don't have family responsibilities. I'm always trying moving the chess pieces of my available time and resources around the board to try to get the best possible configuration.

That's something I've been a big advocate of, is that people should actually schedule more and spend more time thinking about their schedule. The return you can get on productivity can be much higher than the time and flexibility lost actually working on the schedules themselves.

Pat : Does that mean that you go as far as scheduling when you would be actually playing with your kids? I think that makes sense to a point. I'm imaging my kids at an older age saying to themselves, "I can't play with daddy until noon, because that's his time." I work from home too. It's probably a little bit different. I'm just trying to consider how to communicate this scheduling to the other people around you, who may not quite understand.

Cal: In my case, for example, I have a work day. There's set hours where I'm working. Most of the time I'm actually going to be at my office during those hours. When I'm doing this type of scheduling, it's to make sure that I get the most out of those workday hours. Actually, the people around me like it, because it means when I'm done, I'm done. I go, I work, I squeeze every ounce out of the time I have at the office, or the time I have when there's childcare. When it's done, I can be done with confidence. I know what I'm doing. I have my plan. I don't need to get back on email. I don't need to come back for a second shift.

No, I certainly want to schedule my leisure time. I am a big believer, if possible, in saying, "Here's when I work and here's when I'm not working." When I'm working, let me schedule that to

the hilt and squeeze every ounce out of it. When I'm done, let me just be 100% done.

Pat :   Yeah, and 100% present with your kids, which is obviously really important.

Cal: I agree.

Pat :   That's still hard to do. When you come home from work, are you really able to create that boundary in your head to stop thinking about it? Are there moments even when you're at home and even sometimes . . . I admit to this. Sometimes even when I'm playing with the kids as much as I try not to, I'm still thinking about that project I have to finish tomorrow, or that email that came in. Do you experience those things too?

Cal: I used to experience them a lot more. That's when I came up with this strategy I call the work shutdown routine, which was designed directly to address this issue. It's a pretty simple idea. Basically, at the end of my workday, the final thing I do is the shutdown checklist, which for me is first of all I look in my email inboxes. I'm convincing myself there's nothing in there that's urgent, or that's going to be a problem if I don't answer that night. I look in my calendar, just make sure I'm not forgetting some urgent appointment, or something like that.

          I'll typically look over my task list so I can convince myself, "Look, I'm not missing some tasking to get done." I review my plan, what am I doing tomorrow? What am I doing this week? I convince myself, "Your fine. You have a good plan. You're on top of everything." There's no possible open loop in my head at this point. At that point, I actually have a phrase. I got to tell you, people make fun of me mercilessly for this. Actually a lot of people have adopted this phrase. I say, "Schedule shutdown complete."

Pat :   I remember reading that in the book. That's so good.

Cal: That phrase is now connected to the fact that I did those five things. My brain has learned I would not have said that phrase if I hadn't

checked my email inbox, my task list, my calendar, and my plan for the week and was satisfied that I'm on track for what I need to do, and I can shut them for the night.

As the night goes on, if things pop up in your head, instead of having to go back through the whole mental explanation for why, "That's okay, here's how I'm going to handle that." You can just say, "I said shutdown complete and I wouldn't have said that if I hadn't checked everything and said it was okay."

What I found is, and a lot of people have this same experience, the first month you use this activity, you'll find yourself a lot, in the evening, saying, "I said shutdown complete. It's okay. I said shutdown complete. It's okay." It's almost like you're trying to push back the flood tides. You have a very specific weapon to do it with. After about a month, the thoughts don't pop up as much. Your mind just learns to trust it. You get a lot more clarity and presence at home.

Pat :   That's awesome. I love that. I probably would add a little sound effect like, "Beeeee, pouff." or something like that.

The last thing I want to talk about is your TEDx talk at Tyson's which was titled, "Quit Social Media." I read that and I was like, "Whoa." I watched you. I would love for you to explain what you mean by that. Do you literally mean everybody in the world should just stop being on social media? We are wasting our time there. What is your thesis there actually?

Cal: Yeah, I sorted Facebook stock and now I'm trying to manipulate the market. The actual thesis is I think in our culture we have been overemphasizing some of the benefits of social media. Also, I think we've been underemphasizing some of the costs and that it's important for people to step back and give an honest balancing of the cost and benefits of social media in their life.

My thesis is that if everyone did this, you certainly wouldn't have social media go away, because there's a lot of people like your audience, who might be running a business, for example, where social media is the primary way they market. I also think there'd

be many millions of people who are using the services mainly because they felt somewhat obligated and are finding the impact of distraction in their life to be a big negative force. If they did an honest re-balancing, they'd say, "Hey, I don't have to use these."

In my perfect world, social media would be like any other tool, something that some people use because they get these specific clear benefits out and something that a lot of other people don't use, as opposed to what it's become now, which is some sort of cultural obligation. You're not really allowed to question it. You just have to use it regardless of whether or not it's all that useful to your life or not.

Pat :   I really like the thesis. I'm imaging the ripple effect of something like this. For example, if person A didn't go on social media and just start a rant because they just could, then person B, who would see that rant would become more productive, because they wouldn't waste their time thinking about this rant and maybe spending an hour trying to defend the other side of it.

There's a lot of implications here, which is cool. It's not necessarily quit social media, but I think, like you said, being conscious of why you're doing it and what is it for and also, like you were saying earlier, scheduling it in can really be the right solution.

Cal: Yeah. I think, especially, if social media has a clear professional use, so it's how you market your product or services as a company. It's useful to treat it like a professional tool. One of the things I schedule is I put aside time for working with social media. You keep a firewall so that you don't let, for example, a useful professional use of social media allow it to become something that's just on your phone and in your life a lot.

A tip I've heard a lot of people do who use social media professionally for their business enjoy is this idea that they took it off their phone. The idea was, "Yeah, this is important for my business and it's something I schedule to do just like a lot of other things are important to my business." but it's not something that can be a source of distraction when I'm bored in line, or when I'm on a

walk trying to think about something, so I can minimize the negative cognitive impact.

I should clarify though, Pat, that I also think there are a lot of people out there like me who don't need to use it at all. It's certainly not everyone. I think there should be more people who say, "For what I do, I worry about having this thing around." It's engineered to be addictive. I worry about it claiming my attention and in my particular field, it's not so important. I think I'm going to put it aside as a way of telling myself I take my attention seriously and maybe just put my head down and work on honing, or applying my craft.

I think we need much more wider variety of answers. Not everyone uses it. The people who use it have a lot more wide variety in how they use it.

Pat :   Love it. It's funny. I'll be honest with you, I had tweeted at you a couple times. You did have an account, or you do have one. You just aren't on it.

Cal: It's a fake account out there. Someone started it . . .

Pat :   Is it? Great.

Cal: There's a Cal Newport account that I don't know who started it.

Pat :   They got the thank you from me. I'm thankful now that I'm here with you live recording this and being able to thank you in person for all the inspiration, all the hard work that you put into the work that you do and also obviously for your time today being here and supporting everybody's work here on the show.

I want to thank you so much. Cal, if you have a place you'd like people to go to learn more about you and see your work and what you're up to, where should they go?

Cal: Web site, calnewport.com. I blog on there. If you're interested in just being exposed to some of these ideas, you can find them on the blog. My books are available anywhere books are sold. Thanks,

Pat. I really enjoyed this opportunity to come on and talk to you and your audience.

Pat :   Thank you so much. I look forward to the next book and the next part of your life that you'll be sharing, all these amazing tips about. Until then, take care and thanks again.

Cal: Thanks.

Pat :   All right. Wasn't that fantastic? Cal was amazing. Again, Cal, thank you so much for listening to this. Those of you who are on the other end listening, I hope you got some great advice that you can now put into practice to make March and all the months moving forward after this episode a lot more productive for you.

We have another great productivity-driven podcast episode coming next week with even more actionable advice, different kinds of frameworks you can use throughout the week to get even more done. Before that, I do want to just say if you want to get the show notes for this episode, you can head on over to smartpassiveincome.com/session255. Cal Newport, you can find, like he said, all of his stuff at calnewport.com. His recent blog articles and, obviously, his books there too. Check that out for sure.

We mentioned the book club on the podcast, too. If you want to check out the book club, head on over to patsbookclub.com. It's completely free. We do a lot of giveaways and stuff there too for those authors who offer up some free books. Sometimes they're signed. We just give them away to random subscribers, which is really cool.

I also want to take a quick moment to thank 99designs.com, today's sponsor for this episode, who's there to help you with your online design needs. If you need anything designed, from a logo to letterheads, to web pages, tee shirts, mugs, food truck wraps, anything. You put your description of what you're looking for up there. Different designers from around the world will compete for your favorite design. You get to pick your favorite one, which is really cool. You can even have your friends and family vote

for their favorites, if you have a top three that you want to have people select from. You can do that. What's really cool is that the turnaround time is seven days or less. It's really quick, plus it's very economical, especially for those of you who are just starting out and bootstrapping. Ideally, you'd want to have a designer that you'd have on your team. That's hard to set up when you're just starting out. Strive for that, but if you're just starting out and you're building your brand and you want to have things look great, check out 99designs.com/spi. If you go through that link, once again, 99designs.com/spi, you'll get a special addition of $99 towards your next design project. Check that out, be awesome.

Lastly, as I mentioned at the beginning of the show, if you would like to check out smartfromscratch.com, you can check it out from there. If you've read Will It Fly, it's essentially the same material except I go a lot deeper into the work that you need to do. You also get access to a community together that is going through this process. I hold your hand and hold you accountable through it. Check it out, smartfromscratch.com.

Thank you so much. I appreciate you. I look forward to serving you in next week's episode of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Until then, get some deep work done, guys. That's how we make things happen. Cheers. Take care. See you next week. Bye.

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