

5 Discoveries Set this Solopreneur Free

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FREE

SiteSell

Carl Trent has a dream job. He sits around and thinks about Walt Disney World all day. How cool is that? But it gets even better. His dream job, which he does from home, earns him a significant retirement income.

Carl is the owner of [Dad's Guide to WDW](#). His website attracts 75,000 visitors each month. Most solopreneurs would give their eyeteeth for traffic like that, sure. But Carl's story will show how traffic like that is nice, but ***it's what you do with it that really counts.***

This is Carl's story, summarized from a detailed video interview (watch the video at the end of this article, or [read the full transcript here](#)), with editorial annotations that emphasize certain key lessons and strategies.

A little background... An air traffic controller for 27 years, Carl knew that he had to retire at 55 (mandatory for his job). That deadline was 8 years away when he started searching for how to replace his income *and* have fun doing it.

The best place to start is with your passion(s), and so it was with Carl. His (lifelong) passion was Walt Disney World, so he tried being a Disney travel agent at first. He stopped that pretty soon – low pay for long hours was ***not*** his idea of enjoying retirement while building income.

2008 was a fateful year for Carl. He came across [SBI!](#) and he thought...

"Wow. That sounds cool. Build a website."

He loved the idea and got straight to "work" ("play" is probably a better word). The SBI! process confirmed that there were loads of great in-demand topics about WDW. It also showed him that the competition was not overwhelming.

Carl was confident that he could create a DisneyWorld-based content site that would deliver high-quality information in a way that would build traffic and earn income. Carl was good to go!

Discovery #1: Building a Website Around Your Passion Beats Any Job

Carl kicked off his Dad's Guide to WDW in September 2008. Following the process outlined in SBI!'s Action Guide, he decided upon the unique spin for his online business: He would tell the story of Walt Disney World from a dad's perspective.

Key Note: Most solopreneurs fail because they do not complete (or even start) this crucial “pre-domain-name” step-by-step research and preparation. One of the biggest reasons for the high rate and level of success by SBI! owners (“SBlers”) is that they **do** step through this process rigorously.

He began writing lots of high-quality content, always following the process in the Action Guide. Traffic started to build. Visitor numbers kept growing, and so did his income.

At that time, Carl still had his full-time day job. The most valuable resource for every solopreneur is TIME. As “chief cook and bottle-washer,” SBI! leads solopreneurs through a process that prioritizes the highest value strategies in the most time-effective way.

Since the j-o-b chewed up much of Carl’s time, he chose to monetize his site *passively* (low maintenance, one-time setup, no customers). This enabled him to invest his time to build the long-term foundation of strong content, a mailing list, etc. He chose Google AdSense.

It fit the bill nicely. His business income grew steadily until late 2012. Nothing goes up forever, though...

Google had been making major changes to their search ranking algorithm since early 2011. Many websites, both small and large, lost a significant amount of their search traffic through 2012. Carl’s site wasn’t impacted, though (most SBlers had survived to that point, too, because the process follows Google’s requirements).

Finally, though, Google seemed to “double-hex” his income...

1. algorithmic changes finally caught up
2. income from Google ads steadily paid less

By summer of 2013, Carl’s AdSense income had decreased from \$2,500 per month to about \$1,000. Panic time! Carl’s mandatory retirement was coming up fast!

He knew he had to regain Google’s favor at search AND that he had to find a better way to make money from his steady stream of visitors. “Luckily,” SBI! had that covered.

Key Note: Many solopreneurs would find \$1,000 in passive income from an online business rather impressive. But an [SBlers bar for success](#) is set higher than that of the average solopreneur, whose website traffic rarely exceeds 50 visitors per day.

Discovery #2: How to Maximize Your Dollar per Visitor Ratio

Carl had less than 2 years before he had to retire. He needed to regain traffic and improve the amount of income generated per visitor (the “Dollar Per Visitor Ratio”). First, traffic...

The Return of Traffic: SiteSell, the company that developed SBI!, performed 2 massive studies on Google’s major algorithmic changes (over 200 SBlers volunteered to accumulate a massive amount of data).

They had issued detailed reports, for those SBlers who were in the same boat as Carl, outlining exactly how to get their traffic back. Within 6 months, Carl had regained half of the lost traffic, then won the rest back within the year.

While fixing the traffic, Carl explained how he was also working on a major transition in how his online business would generate income ([see full interview at YouTube](#))...

Carl Goes Active: The passive method had served Carl well when time was tight. The upside of retirement is that *he would have more time to grow his business*. That meant that he would be able to advance to active monetization models.

The beauty of having a website is that you can modify your monetization streams as your circumstances change. (SBlers plan for this before they even choose their domain. Like any successful SBlers will emphasize,

“just follow the Action Guide.”)

The monetization technique of online magazines had advanced considerably. Carl noticed that Travel magazines were popular. Best of all, there were none for Walt Disney World. Simple...

That’s how **WDW Magazine** was born. The first issue came out in October 2013. Within three months the WDW online magazine had **500** subscribers. “It just took off,” Carl says.



A snapshot of Dads Guide to World Disney World, featuring the magazines

He didn’t stop there. Through the magazine, Carl had made contact with a whole group of photographers who were producing those incredible pictures that his site and magazine are famous for. With the help of that group, the idea for a new product was born: a 12 month Walt Disney World Calendar, which sold like hot cakes!

Key Note: This is one of the things that excites and inspires all who work at SiteSell. We work for solopreneurs and cheer for them. When they start to see success, there is a kind of “confidence cloud” that lifts them to a new level of thinking, that of successful business people.

Other products followed, like a **Disneyland** Calendar, and Walt Disney World christmas cards. Carl’s latest and so far most ambitious project was the production of a 120 pages, full-color coffee table book, published in 2015: **The Best of WDW – Volume 1**.



The estimated production cost was \$50,000 for 10,000 print copies. Carl needed more than “coffee money” to fund the book. He turned to Kickstarter, a crowdfunding platform, and [created a project there](#). His Kickstarter project ran for one month. At the end of that month, Carl had raised \$61,000, more than enough to produce “The Best of WDW – Volume 1.”

Carl had arrived! He is on a growing snowball of a roll.

The next phase raises a question that every successful solopreneur must face.. *There is no wrong answer, as long as you take the time to breathe and think it out carefully.* In one sense, it’s (almost) as important as doing all that pre-domain research. Here we go...

Discovery #3: How (and IF) You Should Go from “Solo” to Team!

At a certain point, every solopreneur has the problem of handling the extra work that success brings. We call that a “pleasant problem” for obvious reasons. It can turn ugly, though, if not addressed well. There are two big-picture, B&W answers (with shades of gray in between)...

1. “I love working alone, don’t bug me.” A surprising number of solopreneurs do NOT want the “hassle” (choice of words reflects the psychology) of dealing with customers, vendors, hiring people to help, etc.
2. “Solopreneurism was great, but I want to grow this BIG.” This solopreneur is about to grow into a self-funded entrepreneur (no Venture Capital “masters” for these business people!). He’s ready to work harder than ever **and** to manage people, deal with customers, etc.

Neither of the above is right or wrong. You can only get the wrong answer if you don’t realize the option exists or don’t think about what YOU really want.

This is the point where a solopreneur can try for the best of both worlds, trying to keep “solo” but also trying to add new hours to the 24 hours clock. Exhaustion is inevitable, with all the mistakes and loss of perspective that comes with the territory.

On the other hand, truly ambitious solopreneurs may not realize the opportunity in front of them. If only they realized that adding people (to take some of the weight off) is easier than they realized. Once again, SBI! is right there, ready for anything the solopreneur may face – in this case, the articles on “Outsourcing” seem “just in time,” but they’ve been waiting for Carl to catch up.

When we asked Carl whether he outsourced any part of his business, he admitted that he hadn’t been very successful at outsourcing. “I am more of a team-building type of guy,” he said. He went on to explain that several years ago he’d been looking for help. Instead of going to one of the freelance sites like Elance, UpWork, PeoplePerHour, he asked on his own website.

For some niches, and depending on the role you hope to fill, your best employee will likely be among the visitors to your site, subscribers to your newsletter, social media fans/followers, etc.

Walt Disney World is one such niche. And sure enough, Carl found a lady from Canada, an avid reader and fan, who was more than happy to write content for him and handle other tasks.

One of her tasks was and still is answering visitor questions that come in via Carl’s [Content 2.0](#) section. He customized it to “Ask Dad” (what else? 😊). Because she’s such a fan and reads all of Carl’s content, she can communicate well in Carl’s “voice.”

She is now Carl’s first full time employee. Not just an “employee,” though. He has a passionate collaborator. Just try to hire someone like *that* anywhere else!

He also has a part-time employee who looks after all his social media channels. And then, there’s a whole group of photographers who do freelance work for him. All in all, Carl estimates that he has a team of about 50 people.

KEY NOTE: While a solopreneur, per definition, runs his or her business mostly as a one (wo)man show, there comes a point where you need help if you want to take your business to the next level.

SBI! teaches its users what they need to know about outsourcing and partnerships; they learn about the different levels of outsourcing, and which one fits their personal time and financial situation.

Carl’s method of outsourcing is often the best one, depending on the abilities you need to bring on board and depending on your niche. For example, Carl would most likely have to go to a 3rd party outsourcing company to hire a programmer to develop an app or special site functions.

However, for content-type roles, no one is better suited than a loyal visitor or customer. They know and love your topic, style, products and business almost as well as you! Their passion and expertise will shine through when communicating for you.

Discovery #4: Choosing the Right Provider Makes all the Difference (What Carl Loves About SBI!)

SBIers universally love the Action Guide and the step-by-step process (some prefer the videos, others the written version). We are always interested, though, to find out which specific features they like (after moving beyond “core functions” like our keyword brainstorming and sitebuilding tools with built-in SEO advice). What strikes Carl’s fancy?

Carl came back to his favorite, Content 2.0 (AKA “C2”) as one of the [many SBI! tools](#) that he uses extensively. C2 enables a visitor to write a new Web page on your site, complete with text, images, or a video. Other visitors can comment on that, making it even more interactive. It’s also ideal for a Q&A section like Carl’s “Ask Dad” invitation.

Next, Carl surprised us with something we had long taken for granted, so much so that we don't even mention it on any of our product pages...

"I have a blog that's off of SBI!. It's a WordPress blog hosted by a big hosting company. Last year I wrote a post that got a bunch of traffic, 4000 views in 30 minutes.

*All of a sudden you can't get to the blog! 30 minutes later, they actually disabled my whole account. They turned off my account and sent me a message about it **two hours later**.*

You look at their terms of use and it says nothing about disabling your account if you get a lot of traffic all of a sudden. They just do it.

With SBI!, if I write a post that gets a million hits, they're not going to turn me off. So that's one big feature that I would highlight, the ability to get unlimited traffic on your site."

We knew that SB!ers love our high uptime. We are fortunate to be able to share a beyond-the-state-of-the-Web hosting platform with a large North American transaction processor and payments company. When you are in the "money-collecting" business, you can't afford to get hacked, disabled by a DOS attack, etc.

And in this security-conscious age, the SB! system of sitebuilding is more secure than any other Web host (due to the nature of our software) and it is *that much more* secure than WordPress-hosted sites (WP has always had, and still has, vulnerabilities).

Our customers seem to take the "unlimited traffic" for granted, almost as granted as the fact that it's a virtual "given" that just about anyone will do better with SB!. Carl doesn't. Once you have experienced a hugely successful page being taken down in the middle of exploding traffic, you swear off cheap hosting forever. High-quality hosting like ours will cost you \$15-\$20/month.

Finally, Carl's heart loves his **page load time**. Because his website uses many high-resolution images, it's crucial for him that images are being processed fast. No one wants their visitors to wait for the pages to load, *especially on mobile*.

While the importance of page load speed is exaggerated for desktop/laptop browsing, it was clear to us that increasingly important mobile would have a bandwidth bottleneck for years to come. We put our tech team on squeezing every bit of "slow" out of page loading.

Carl says he has a lot of problems with page load speed on his WordPress sites, but ***his SB! site is incredibly fast***.

Discovery #5: How Your Business Impacts Your and Your Family's Life

We have a confession to make at this point. When we first started SB! and started to see how well it worked, we realized that people recognized that they wanted to have successful online businesses, of course. But *the bigger goal behind that is what really drives people*.

A stay-at-home mother (or dad) of 3 may say that s/he wants the SB!-grown part-time business to generate a rather realistic goal of, say, \$700 per month. But what is the real business goal?...

1. a few hours of grown-up break and intellectual stimulation
2. supplement spouse's full-time income with enough to save for college or vacation, etc.
3. a sense of proud accomplishment as a genuine, solid resource takes shape as *his/hers*.

It's about the money superficially, but it's really, deeply, about what the money represents. For Carl, he needed to replace an air traffic controller's salary. What did he get?

At first, starting his online business didn't bring any major lifestyle changes for Carl, as he was still going to work

every day. He recounted the regular drudge known to all with a job... get up, get dressed, have breakfast, commute to work, stay there all day long, come back home, have dinner, etc. You know the drill.

But once he retired (*7 months earlier than planned, thanks to the income from his online business*), his life changed considerably. No more commute. No more working for someone else. His part-time side business became his "job." A job that he loves to this day. *His life is his own!* That is one heck of a reward!



[Save](#)

Carl in his home office, proudly presenting his retirement plaque

What about his wife? How does she benefit? Well, he recounts a charming anecdote about his transition to working from home. It is a hilarious twist on a retirement stereotype. Carl said that she was sort of worried before he left his job...

"My wife thought it was going to be hard on her when I came home because I was going to bother her. We found that it's quite the opposite. We had to set boundaries on her when she could come into the office because she bothered me."

[Claiming your work space and setting clear boundaries](#) is one of the core foundations for a successful work-from-home lifestyle, whether you are retired, or a work-at-home mom or dad.

KEY NOTE: Solopreneurs are the largest group of online business-builders, by far. They are the huge base of a pyramid, with each "slice" getting smaller as we move from "solopreneur" to "small business" to "mid-sized" to "Fortune 500"... to "Apple/Google." And yet...

Their turnover rate is sky-high. Most fail, repeatedly, until they give up on this as an impossible challenge. It's not. The problem is simple. Solopreneur needs are not understood. As we said earlier, TIME is the most important resource (a non-renewable one, at that). It's also a problem because they don't have enough of it.

That is why a product like SBI! is so important. We designed it from the ground up to enable the solopreneur to

prioritize every minute of time optimally all the way through the process. Bottom line = maximum time efficiency = the highest rates and levels of success.

Carl's Two Pieces of Advice for Aspiring Solopreneurs

Carl has soared, fallen and is fully back (and will stay that way), monetizing far more effectively. What one piece of advice would he give to solopreneurs just getting started? He has two!...

Advice #1: Pick Something You Love

This is "classic SBI!," advice that is as valid today as it was 15 years ago when SBI! started, and as valid as it's been forever! In Carl's own words...

*"You know there's a lot of business builders that say ... find something that's going to make you money. Don't do that because website building, product development, everything you do, **the passion for your topic is what's going to set you apart from everybody else.**"*

Pick something you are passionate about, something you love...something that it won't matter how bad things get; you're still going to want to go talk about it every day. So that's the main thing; to be passionate about your topic. That's going to be what serves you best."

Great advice. We couldn't have said it better! Next...

Advice #2: Figure Out How You Are Going to Make Money Before You Start

Carl admitted that he didn't plan his monetization strategy very well when he started with SBI!. He breezed through that part of the SBI! Action Guide in an hour or so, confident that "he got it." He's not alone, despite the fact that we emphasize its importance so prominently that the only option left is to somehow reach right out of the page and wag a finger if they go too fast! 😊

As a result, Carl had to scramble. Luckily, he was able to pivot to a model that *would* monetize for his niche... magazines. Sometimes, though, an SBler builds up to, say, 4,000 visitors per day, only to realize that there is no *realistic* monetization model other than ads.

KEY NOTE: Why is "realistic" italicized? It is because in their desire to "do" this niche, they glibly declare that, "Yes, I can sell a ton of those to this audience." Then, when it comes down to actually planning it out, they realize that the idea won't fly, or that it costs too much to develop, etc. See how much time you save by *truly knowing beforehand?*

Quoting Carl's words again...

*"You need to have something to sell of your own. You can do it with affiliate products if you find a good one. **But the best thing you can have is your own product to sell.** That's the best thing. Informational sites are cool and they're fun and if that's what you're looking for, fine, do an informational site."*

But if you're looking for a living, a way to make money, a way to supplement an income, you need to start with some sort of product, some kind of idea about a product."

KEY NOTE: Yes indeed. We launched a course called Make It!. It is "the SBI! of the make-your-own-product world." It walks you through the whole development process, which is not as mysterious as it may appear. When you show people the exact "how to" of each step, the fog of mystery is burnt away by the sun of clarity (not sure about that metaphor, though 😊).

Every solopreneur is different. At one end of the spectrum, they love creating valuable content and interacting through social media. But they don't want any of the bothers of hiring, training, firing (some of these folks have managed teams of 100 or more in "another life").

These people deliberately choose passive monetization models, knowing that they are “leaving money on the table” in return for a lifestyle they love. Once again, while the money is nice, building a successful business is really about more meaningful goals.

At the other end of the spectrum are the ones who aim to maximize their profits by producing and selling their own digital or physical products. They know that the higher earnings come with the obligation of customers, suppliers, employees or contractors, etc.: They need to manage their businesses actively and, sooner or later, hire staff or outsource certain tasks to keep their businesses viable.

This person, though, often does not see that as a downside. Many of these folks go on to having 3, then 6, then 10 full-time employees with profits that they only dreamed of. They are now officially “small businesses,” not “solopreneurs.

Neither direction is better. SBI! provides for both ends of the spectrum, and everyone in between. Days 4 and 10 of the Action Guide are fully focused on monetization.

In Day 4, you investigate and plan your monetization strategy, based on 14 possible monetization models. Day 10 is all about implementing the model(s) you have identified as the best fit for your niche and level of commitment.

Whatever your goals and ambitions for life are, SBI! is there to meet and enable. Although many SB!ers thank us profusely in the forums, our answer is always the same...

“Thanks very much, that’s very kind. Really, though, we were just the catalyst that enables your efforts to reach your goals. YOU are the star of your business, not us. Congratulations! :-)”

That’s not false modesty. If your motivation level is low, if you don’t much care for your niche, if you plan on getting your “knowledge” from research instead of knowing your niche, SBI! can’t do much for you. Here’s the proof...

We honor our guarantee and refund 15% of those starting. That number has been remarkably constant since 2001. Some just aren’t willing to put in the work to change their lives. And that’s fine as long as they are willing to adjust what they want out of life to match what they are willing to put into it.

That bit of philosophy brings us to the end of our interview and editorial with Carl Trent, “the Disney Dad.”

Thanks very much, Carl for sharing your remarkable journey from air traffic controller to solopreneur-publisher/product developer. We love the story of someone who makes money by thinking about Walt Disney World all day!



Carl and his wife at Disney's Hollywood Studios

To the reader... we hope you take away some valuable lessons. We designed SBI! to be a “reproducible” process, which means that anyone with “BAM” (Brain – Attitude – Motivation) can *just get started* and build a online business that helps you meet your real goals in life.

What's next?

[Start your own career as an online business owner with SBI! today](#)

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Learn From More High-Traffic, Profitable Solopreneurs

- **Recent Success Stories With Takeaway Lessons.** Read more recent inspiring stories from our blog. They deliver useful ideas and takeaway lessons from folks who've “done it and won it.” If they can do it, *you* can, too!
- **Case Studies.** We take a deep-dive into the full business stories of several solopreneur successes. They periodically update their progress so you can see how they and their businesses grow over a period of years. This gives you excellent insight into what solopreneurs can accomplish with *real* online businesses.
- **Hundreds of the “Top 0.5%.”** Every one of these SBI! businesses (hundreds of them) rank in the top 1 million active websites (out of approximately 200 million!). That's all the more impressive because **1)** we are such a small community and **2)** many Top 0.5% sites are mid-sized or large companies.

Solopreneurs fail at astronomical rates. SBI! makes you 100x more likely to succeed (that's not a typo!). It will never be easy, but we do make it way more **doable**.

Scan the wide variety of solopreneurs who are winning in real niches. Use it to get a feeling for what SBIers do, as well as to generate ideas. What do *you* know? Turn it into a business.

- [Bio](#)
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Carl Trent

Carl Trent, Dad, or The Disney Dad is a true Walt Disney World expert. Just ask him. Carl has a dream job. He sits around and thinks about Walt Disney World all day. Carl is the owner of Dad's Guide to WDW and WDW Magazine. He publishes a yearly Walt Disney World Wall Calendar and in 2015 released The Best of WDW – Volume 1, an incredible coffee table book of Walt Disney World pictures.

