

Case Study & Income Report #8 [August 2020 edition]

For whatever reason that I don't really know or understand, I have historically created sites that trend low in the fall. I try to create evergreen sites, but then I always end up choosing keywords and content that starts to trend low when the back to school season starts.

Except for the years when I was deep in the Halloween costumes niche.

Anyways, the purpose of that little back story is to let you know that the overall income trend for the month is a slight decline. And I expect that to be true through October, though I did some fresh keyword research last week with Google Trends to look for things that pop during the fall...so hopefully this year will perform slightly better than usual for me.



Back to this month though...

Remember, the sites in this report are only a portion of my portfolio and not the only sites that bring in revenue.

***And as always, I'm an affiliate marketer and this post*

contains affiliate links, meaning I will be compensated if you make a purchase after clicking on my links

What Happened in August

Honestly, this was a shit month for productivity for me, despite me really wanting to get massive amounts of work done.

- There was a 13-day heatwave and my apartment has no air con. I bought a portable unit, but it only cooled it down to 27C inside, so I was too hot to concentrate.
- The heatwave ended and then a day later the power went out in my area at 11am...by 7pm it was still out, so we schlepped into the city center where there was power to grab some food and spend the night in a hotel. (the electric ended up being out over 12 hours)
- Neighbor started gutting an apartment for a renovation and the power tool noise was every single day but Sunday from 10am-ish until 10pm at night. This also made it difficult to concentrate some days.

When I look at my daily word count spreadsheet I can see that I had zero days more than half the month. (If you don't track your daily work like this, then you really should.)



I don't even think I responded to a single HARO email the

entire month. Luckily I wasn't responsible for any client work during this period!

Though I did manage to start a new site after seeing an interesting opportunity.

But in between the seemingly never-ending construction noise, and one failed attempt due to audio issues, I did manage to get on Skype with Doug from Niche Site Project. He interviewed me for his podcast/YouTube channel, so I'll share that once it's live.

The Sites – August Update

In case you missed it in the [announcement post](#), or just can't remember, I'll be recapping the basics of each site before I give you the details on what the month looked like for each site.

Site #1

Here's what you should know about this site:

- **Niche:** Professional services
- **Monetization:** display ads + info products + sponsorships/direct ads
- **Income Goal:** I'll be happy with \$2,000/mo but I think it has the potential for ~~low to~~ mid to high four figures monthly (if not more).
- **Growth Plan:** HARO, joining niche relevant groups/forums for traffic leaking, ebooks/books, social media marketing. This will be a large site/brand.
- **The case study angle:** building a successful non-affiliate site

I decided to test out some Writer Access writers for this site

to see if I could lower my content costs. If you recall, I've been using Word Agents at \$0.06/word.

I have a LOT of content planned for this site, and I know it won't be profitable for a while. So, I figure that I have three options here:

- find cheaper content
- change my content strategy slightly to go after slightly less relevant keywords that will rank faster
- write more/most of the content myself

My competition in this niche are mostly DR50+ sites, which is why I know this is going to be a long road. But there is a shoulder niche where the ranking sites are lower DR...and the content topics could work on this site.

But, they don't really fit with my vision for this site cause they're a bit more in the spammy/clickbait style of content.

It's kind of hard to explain without revealing more about the niche, so I hope that makes sense. Anyways, I tried the cheaper content route and it was a disaster.



One article I got back from Writer Access was almost a carbon copy of another site's article on the same topic, but the writer had just changed a word every few words so that it passed Copyscape. It read like complete gibberish too.

What a nightmare.

I only ended up with two articles that were decent enough to go live with and the rest were garbage. I actually ended up telling some of the writers to just release the article because I wasn't confident they would re-write it properly.

So, now I'm reconsidering the temporary content strategy change and how it might affect the brand in the future. Cause I definitely do not want to write content on this topic since it's not really of interest to me.



New posts for this site: two

Rankings are about the same as the month before. My best keyword is at #15 and that's for the homepage.

Most of the traffic to the site right now is referral traffic from the HARO links that I've earned, with only 3 people landing on the site via organic search last month.

That sucks, but I knew how competitive this niche was before I entered it. So, it is what it is.

New links for this site: one (naturally earned link on low DR site)

Summary for site #1: Tested out new writers to try to save money, it was disaster. Considering a slight change in content

strategy for quicker wins.

Site #2

Here's what you should know about this site:

- **Niche:** Transportation
- **Monetization:** affiliate (Amazon + others) + display ads
- **Income Goal:** I'll be happy with \$1000/mo but I think it has the potential for mid four figures monthly based on a conversation I had with someone in this niche.
- **History:** Site has been earning steadily and is profitable. It was sitting, neglected, when I decided to pick it back up this year.
- **Growth Plan:** hit it with lots of informational articles to optimize content for ad money (first goal = [Ezoic](#) and eventually Mediavine). I also need to update old content & utilize more non-Amazon affiliates with longer cookies. I may end up testing Pinterest on this site to see how it performs.
- **The case study angle:** prioritizing links over content + expanding beyond Amazon + beyond Google traffic

I'm quite pleased with how this site is progressing right now, both because of the low effort and low expenses. The only thing that I did for the month was buy an "editorial link" from [NO-BS](#) (they're giving a free \$100 credit to new accounts who use my link).

That 'editorial link' is basically a niche edit, so a link in an old post on a site.

But that link hasn't even gone live yet! So, the traffic and income growth can only be attributed to age and previous efforts compounding.

Though the site did earn 3 natural links, they're not really

all that powerful.

New posts for this site: zero

New links for this site: three (earned naturally to info post)



Traffic is up by around 9%, which means at the current rate it will meet the Ezoic traffic requirements by the end of the year. That seems like a long time to wait, and that would have me missing out entirely on the traditionally higher Q4 ad money, so I need to prioritize trying Pinterest traffic for this site.

For August, only 0.10% of traffic to this site was via social, and that was 100% Facebook where I've been auto-posting new content there for years.

Total income for this site last month: \$170.73

Happy to see this increase, but no idea why it was such a good one. This is the highest income since I started reporting it here (though not the highest in the site's lifetime).

Most of the increase came from Amazon affiliate money (almost double previous month's earnings), though AdSense did increase a decent amount as well.

The income for this site is a mixture of AdSense and Amazon affiliate. I use [AAWP](#) for the Amazon links on this site.

Summary for site #2: Income is up and traffic is up. All I did was order a link that's not even live yet.

Site #3

Here's what you should know about this site:

- **Niche:** Health/Fitness
- **Monetization:** affiliate (Amazon + others) + display ads (and maybe products?)
- **Income Goal:** Looking to sell once I'm stable at somewhere around \$7500-\$8000/monthly
- **History:** Site has been earning steadily and is profitable. It is somewhat seasonal, though the niche is evergreen.
- **Growth Plan:** Hit it with lots of informational articles to optimize content for ad money. This site has enough traffic for Ezoic, but I'm holding out to qualify for Mediavine. I also need to update old content & utilize more non-Amazon affiliates with longer cookies/higher paying offers. HARO is the only link building that I currently have planned for this site.
- **The case study angle:** prioritizing content over links + building a mailing list + monetization diversification + alternative traffic growth

And here's that income decline that I warned you about. This is 100% normal for this site during this part of the year, though nothing else about this year has been normal for it!

Speaking of not normal, there were still a lot of returns this month that lowered my income for the site by over \$600. Crazy, eh?

I took some time to do some 'back of the napkin' math on this site and have decided that I'm focused on selling it once it hits around \$7,500 – \$8,000 average monthly income. I never hold onto sites this long, so I'm hoping to accomplish this next year but I honestly have no idea how long to expect it to

take.

New posts for this site: eight

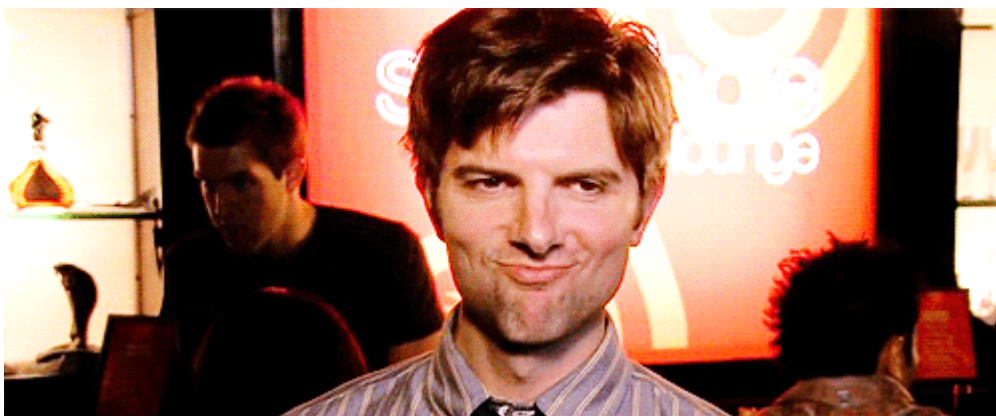
The new posts are a combination of outsourced content, a guest post, and content that I wrote myself.



Traffic actually declined compared to the previous month, meaning that it's currently not high enough to meet the new Mediavine requirements. I expect it won't really start climbing good again until after the holidays, but hopefully I'm wrong about that.

You might find it interesting to know that organic traffic is what dropped and social traffic actually increased. For August, Pinterest increased to almost 17% of the site's traffic.

And remember, all I'm doing with Pinterest is using [Tailwind](#) with the Tribes Power-Up that gives me access to 10 tribes. I only login to Tailwind when I publish a new post, meaning that it's super low effort.



New links for this site: zero

Obviously, I'm not counting all the spam/junk links that show

up each month.

Total income for this site last month: \$2,709.81

Like the previous month, lots of returns lowered the income of the site again this month.

Last month's income is a mix of AdSense, Amazon affiliate, and other affiliates. I use the [AAWP plugin](#) on this site as well.

Summary for site #3: Traffic dropped; income dropped; and the traffic no longer qualifies for Mediavine...for now.

Site #4

Here's what you should know about this site:

- **Niche:** Lifestyle
- **Monetization:** display ads + affiliates + products + info products (+ possibility for real world business offshoot)
- **Income Goal:** I *think* I'll be happy with \$2500/mo but I know of a few people in this niche making \$20K+/month.
- **Growth Plan:** Right now I'm all about content creation. Next up is traffic diversification and this niche does well on Pinterest. For link building, I haven't decided yet. There are a lot of guest posting opportunities in this niche though.
- **The case study angle:** mega authority site from day one to mega status → building a brand from the beginning with long term growth focus on diversifying traffic + monetization

Despite how it may seem, I'm actually really excited about the potential of this site. And seeing a site in the same niche go up on one of the broker marketplaces last month and with a big sales price really gets me excited about it.

Honestly, I've considered more than once selling off most of my sites to just go super hard on this one. That the kind of potential that's here.

As you may recall, I struggled a bit with branding on this one and even considered changing the domain early on. Well, inspiration finally struck and I created the perfect logo for the site.

I did the logo myself with some vectors from a free trial of Adobe Stock. I edited those and put together parts of them to create the perfect logo.

I'm really stoked about the logo and branding now, and really happy that I didn't end up changing the domain name...though it was a good option too.

Since I finally got a proper logo for the site, I was able to really dig in and get started on the social channels. So, I've created the Pinterest, Facebook, and Twitter and started filling those out.

I think both Pinterest and Facebook will do well for this site.



Sadly, traffic fell for this site in August, though only by around 10 visitors. I'm still shy of 100 visitors/month, which isn't surprising since zero work was done in July and almost nothing was done to the site in August.

This site is now ranking for over 100 keywords, including some featured snippets. Still focused on ultra longtails, though will start going after higher competition keywords that I think will do well on Pinterest.

New posts for this site: two

New links for this site: zero

Total income for this site last month: \$0.00

Summary for site #4: Slight traffic decrease, rankings on the rise, fresh content added and social channels started.

New Expenses for August 2020

If you want to know about any recurring expenses or previous expenses, then refer to [February's report in this section](#).

Here's new expenses for the sites for August:

Site #1

- \$7.00 Digital Ocean droplet at [Cloudways](#) (two sites on this server, so I split out the cost for just this site)
- \$72.68 for two articles via Writer Access (likely won't be using them for this site in the future)

	Site #1	
MONTH	EXPENSES	INCOME
Feb '20	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mar '20	\$8.99	\$0.00
Apr '20	\$1,478.20	\$0.00
May '20	\$7.00	\$0.00
June '20	\$355.00	\$0.00
July '20	\$7.00	\$0.00
Aug '20	\$79.68	\$0.00

Site #2

- \$6.50 Vultr server at [Cloudways](#) (two sites on this server, so I split out the cost for just this site)
- \$169 for niche edit link via [NO-BS](#)

Site #2		
MONTH	EXPENSES	INCOME
Feb '20	\$0.00	\$55.30
Mar '20	\$0.00	\$76.60
Apr '20	\$12.20	\$114.67
May '20	\$120.50	\$88.71
June '20	\$195.50	\$124.23
July '20	\$6.50	\$76.90
Aug '20	\$175.50	\$170.73

Site #3

- \$22.45 hosting with [BigScoots](#) (this account is split with another site)
- \$166.87 for articles via Writer Access

Site #3		
MONTH	EXPENSES	INCOME
Feb '20	\$0.00	\$608.41
Mar '20	\$0.00	\$1,388.69
Apr '20	\$69.00	\$4,629.27
May '20	\$106.10	\$6,056.33
June '20	\$763.10	\$4,304.02
July '20	\$17.00	\$3,087.55
Aug '20	\$189.32	\$2,709.81

Site #4

- \$6.50 Vultr server at [Cloudways](#) (two sites on this server, so I split out the cost for just this site)

Site #4		
MONTH	EXPENSES	INCOME
Feb '20	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mar '20	\$0.00	\$0.00
Apr '20	\$0.00	\$0.00
May '20	\$0.00	\$0.00
June '20	\$6.50	\$0.00
July '20	\$6.50	\$0.00
Aug '20	\$6.50	\$0.00

Final Thoughts & Summary

So, we're seven months into this data and overall these sites are running, collectively, at around \$20,000 profit since February. However, the two new sites are not profitable at all (partly because they're not monetized).

This is a good glimpse at what my overall portfolio looks like though – sites that earn a lot, sites that earn a little, and sites that earn zilch cause they're young. I'd wager that most people who follow the build and flip method, where you're regularly creating new sites, have a portfolio like this.

That being said, I also am purposely building out sites #1 and #4 in a manner where I'm focused more on playing the long game instead of quick and easy wins. In fact, I actually have another site that's basically in the same niche as site #4 and it's been profitable for a while.

However, it's built out more like your typical affiliate site with lots of "best PRODUCT TYPE" posts. I've had it for a few years, but never been that excited about it since it's so heavily affiliate focused.

...but I cannot sell that site and still work on site #4 due to [non-competes](#). So, for now it's just earning around \$400 monthly on auto-pilot as I haven't touched it in two years.



Though I've been thinking about using it for testing various

things in the niche before rolling it out to site #4. Another option is to eventually 301 it to site #4, but I'm not crazy about that idea. Or, sell it to someone who doesn't care about a non-compete.

Anyways, that closes the book on a very unproductive month. My focus for the next 30 days is:

- site #1: rethink content + look on Pinterest to see if niche will do well there
- site #2: get a new [Tailwind](#) account and load up Pinterest for the month to see if I can boost traffic
- site #3: content, content, content
- site #4: finish filling out social accounts + new content

I also need to do some research for each site in terms of content that goes viral, or semi-viral, on Pinterest and maybe Facebook. And then prioritize that content for some traffic boosts.

Quick summary for the month:

	All 4 Sites	
MONTH	EXPENSES	INCOME
Feb '20	\$0.00	\$663.71
Mar '20	\$8.99	\$1,465.29
Apr '20	\$1,559.40	\$4,743.94
May '20	\$233.60	\$6,145.04
June '20	\$1,320.10	\$4,428.25
July '20	\$37.00	\$3,164.45
Aug '20	\$451.00	\$2,880.54

And remember, these four sites are only a portion of my portfolio ☐ I also want to remind you that sites #2 and #3 were existing sites that have been earning and ranking before starting this whole thing.

Got any questions? Requests for other data in future updates? Let me know.