

Frank DeBlasi – CEO and Co-founder of Hoopla Doopla

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Frank DeBlasi is Co-founder and CEO of Hoopla Doopla, an online shopping site. An expert in online shopping, Frank is the individual behind the day to day operations of Hoopla Doopla. Frank also played a big role in building Hoopla Doopla's site architecture, designed its interface, and established the relationships with all merchants the company is affiliated with throughout the site.

A veteran front end web engineer and digital media professional, Frank has been building and managing websites and web projects for over 15 years. Out of the office, Frank is a husband, and father of two beautiful daughters. His family is his biggest joy in life. They are the

inspiration for everything he does and what lives for. When it's time for just being Frank, you can find him on the softball field, eating seafood at a nice restaurant or just being a geek playing with his gadgets.

What are you working on right now?

We occasionally survey our members asking them for improvements or suggestions to our service. Our development team has features in the works to improve on our concept as a one stop shopping portal. At this time, in addition to preparing for the holiday shopping season, we are working on finishing up our next software release. We listen to our member's feedback, and this release contains many user interface enhancements as well as new features our members have requested.

Within the last year, with the launch of our affiliate program, we have turned our members into revenue sharing partners in our business. We now share a percentage of our profits with our members for simply referring new customers to us, giving them the option to earn residual income through us.

Where did the idea for Hoopla Doopla come from?

A true bargain hunter, I have always been big on saving money. You could say I like to get the most bang for my

buck. It's not just something I feel is necessary, I actually enjoy the thrill of getting a good deal! I know how great it feels to save money. Helping other people save, that feeling is even greater. I can proudly say, I've done my job.

Owning my own business has been something I have always wanted to do. In late 2008, I began planning out the concept for my company, Hoopla Doopla, an online shopping website. A site that would not only save people money when shopping online, it would be intelligent in doing so. Offer great deals from popular merchants, and share my company's profits with my members. With the economy being down, this would prove to be a great concept for a business.

What does your typical day look like?

I rise at about 7am to two kids climbing on me in bed. Then shower and shave, have some yogurt and a banana to start the morning. Then, fire up the all in one desktop and iPad, load up today's deals, answer a few emails from merchant managers, put some promotions and other materials together along with other normal workday stuff. I take occasional breaks and go for walks or play a video game.

Although, as a business owner, work is never really "done" for the day, I make time for my kids after dinner for a bit. There is life outside of work when you have a family. They

have things going on and you are a part of it. It can be a juggling act.

When 8pm rolls around and the kids are asleep, it's onto the laptop to finish the promotional emails that came in throughout the day. Finishing up the day round 9pm-ish, it's now my time. It is now that you can find me reading tech articles on the iPad in bed, watching a ball game, or exercising to unwind.

I find the hardest thing in life is to find a good work to life balance. Too much of one and not enough of the other is a bad mix. Hard work is necessary for success, but you need a break from the action to entertain and recharge.

How do you bring ideas to life?

I'm one of those people that has the napkin and pen ready in my head all the time. Whether a new idea pops into my head or something new for an existing project, I write everything down. Send myself emails as reminders. I don't want to forget anything.

As mentioned above, I am a front end web engineer and digital media professional by trade. With startup money hard to come by these days, these skills would prove to be valuable in getting my business off the ground. My co-founder, Tom Cangle and I were able to combine our 15+

years of experience, and save lots of money by building the entire site ourselves from the ground up.

What's one trend that really excites you?

If you can call the Internet a trend, it beyond excites me. The way it has become a part of our lives with all the freedom of publishing and creativity it gives you to put your ideas in front of the world. Think back for a minute as to where we were less than 20 years ago without the Internet. It has literally become the best means of communication on the planet for messaging, publishing and socially interacting abroad.

What was the worst job you ever had and what did you learn from it?

I've never really had a bad job, but I have worked with people that have made a job experience bad. There's nothing worse than working with unqualified people who can't do their job or simply don't care about it. It just makes your job harder, less enjoyable, and more frustrating.

If you were to start again, what would you do differently?

If I were to start over today, I would have gotten my marketing plan together before launching my product. It can

be a bit of a struggle assembling and executing a marketing plan once the business is moving.

As an entrepreneur, what is the one thing you do over and over and recommend everyone else do?

I tell people not to get discouraged by failures or setbacks. Especially when starting a business for yourself, you are taking on a challenge. You must go into it being able to accept and deal with possible setbacks along the way. Do not get discouraged by them. These setbacks are your biggest learning experiences you will have when starting and growing your business. Being able to work your way through highs and lows will not only benefit the growth of your company, it will make you a smarter leader and business owner.

What is one failure you had as an entrepreneur, and how did you overcome it?

As stated above, my biggest failure was not having a marketing plan ready for the launch of my company. We kind of grew into it along the way, and had to work to get our exposure to build a member base. Without a plan or capital to work with in the beginning, we had to rely heavily on public relations and sent out lots of press releases.

What is one business idea that you're willing to give away to our readers?

How about a social networking site dedicated to gossipers? People love to gossip.

If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be and how would you go about it?

I'm lying in bed after a full day. I flip on the news, and the first story is of some crazy mother purposely abandoned her kids in a supermarket. If I could change one thing in the world it would be to reduce or eliminate child abuse. As a father of two, this really gets under my skin seeing and hearing about stuff like that. I think the only practical resolution to this is increasing jail time, although nothing is of any real guarantee these days. If you could turn back time, I wish those kids could be born under different parents.

What are your three favorite online tools or resources and what do you love about them?

Evernote.com – No business owner should be without this tool. Evernote lets you store notes, ideas, web pages, videos, images, just about anything you want to save and remember. The beauty of it is it lets you do it quickly and forget about it for later reference, so you can immediately resume what you

were doing.

Entrepreneur.com – This site needs no explanation. Anything a small business owner wants to know from writing business plans to advice from the experts. They have a great digital format of their magazine too. I read it in the iPad every month. It is very well done.

Helpareporter.com – Probably the best public relations site out there. You get emails sent to you with queries directly from TV producers, magazine editors, bloggers, you name it. They send you the criteria they are looking for their TV shows or articles, and you reply if you or your business fits the match. I have gotten lots of exposure out of this service.

What is the one book that you recommend our community should read and why?

Public Relations for Dummies, by Eric Yaverbaum. Yes, it's a Dummies book, but that's what you need when you are starting out. Simple, clear to understand information about getting the word out on your product or service. How to write press releases, how to deal with the media once you get noticed, even how to make your company website media friendly.

Three people we should follow on Twitter and why?

Evan Weber: Evan is CEO of Experience Advertising, a leading full service affiliate marketing agency. His blog has some fantastic articles on affiliate marketing and building your company's online presence.

Richard Branson: He built an empire and is a positive thinker. Has a lot of good stuff to say and great knowledge. Listen to him.

Darryl Davis: Darryl works as a motivational speaker, mainly in the real estate industry. He speaks at seminars, and even does some stand-up comedy. Watching Darryl's seminars and daily videos help keep your head up and always looking in the right direction. He always puts a smile on people's faces.

When was the last time you laughed out loud? What caused it?

I heard some teenager on a game show a few weeks ago say that "condoms" were houses that people live in. I still laugh thinking about it.

Who is your hero?

When you think of someone being a "hero" in your life, it boils down to the person having some very important characteristics, both personally and professionally. The

person who has been my biggest influence, I have had the opportunity of personally knowing for nearly 20 years. That person is my business partner Tom Cangle. Tom and I have more than a good, grounded business partnership. We think alike, consult one another, and constructively criticize each other's thoughts before they are acted upon. My relationship with Tom has not only helped raise my expectations of myself, it has been is a key factor to our successful chemistry in the office.

Imagine you are in a stage accepting an achievement award for what you did your whole life, what would you say?

If I was accepting an achievement award for what I did my whole life, I would first thank everyone in my life who supported me in everything I did, and got me through my tough times. But the main message I would want to get across is that I am just a regular everyday guy who put his mind to things and never let setbacks get in the way of achieving what I wanted in life. With that said, I would want everyone to feel the same way, in that they could achieve what they want as well if they set their mind to it.

Connect:

Frank DeBlasi's Email: fdeblasi@hoopladoopla.com

Hoopla Doopla's Website: www.hoopladoopla.com

Hoopla Doopla on Facebook:

Hoopla Doopla on Twitter:

Hoopla Doopla on YouTube: