

**ARON LABERGE**

CEO, Fanzter, Inc.

(Coolspotters is a product of Fanzter)

1) How did you come up with the idea for the site?

Before finally giving into the entrepreneurial bug and starting Fanzter, I worked at ESPN. I oversaw all of ESPN's consumer-facing technology development, both online and on-air. In this role, I had the opportunity to observe the development and adoption of new technologies months before they became mainstream. ESPN reaches over 90M fans per month. That is the best real-time focus group in the world. I started seeing some exciting things quickly emerging in social media. The first was the "wisdom of crowds". 10,000 people are smarter than 1 (in every case) and the collective wisdom and experience of the "crowd" can creatively solve almost any problem. The human brain is the most advanced computer in the world. The second thing was something I saw every day at ESPN - the fanaticism of fans. Sports fans have an insatiable appetite for all things sports. They want to attend every event, know everything about their favorite team and player; there is no end to their desire to soak up all things sports. I knew that I wanted to combine the power of social knowledge with a topic as powerful and interesting as sports - I just hadn't figure out what that was.

My co-founder, Eric Kirsten, and I met at my youngest son's soccer game. Eric was the coach of the team. We hit it off immediately, and quickly became friends. Eric is a serial entrepreneur, having started and sold several companies already in his young career. When he found out I was thinking about leaving the comfortable and secure confines of ESPN, we immediately started brainstorming ideas every time we saw each other. Eric used to develop movie scripts at Universal Pictures, and quickly reminded me that one of the few content areas that has even more passionate fans than sports is celebrity and popular culture. That is when we knew that we wanted to do something around celebrity that leverages the power of social media software. Over a two week period (back in June, 2007) we figured out, that despite all of the celebrity content out there, nobody was really focusing on celebrities as trendsetters and buying influencers. We decided to combine the world's knowledge and interest in fashion, style, brands, and products with their love of celebrity and popular culture. The result was our original idea for Coolspotters.

2) Have any celebrities voiced their opinion about the site good or bad?

We've gotten to know some celebrity publicists very well, and their feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. We're committed to making sure that celebs aren't disparaged in any way, so I think they really appreciate seeing their clients recognized for their personal style or fashion sense instead of who they're dating or breaking up with. So, I'd say the general opinion so far has been very good.

3) What do you think about the media's obsession with celebrities?

Society will always look for role models, and everyone has the freedom to decide for themselves who to look up to. The public's interest has gotten a bit extreme in terms of what the paparazzi puts public figures through - invading their privacy, risking their safety for the sake of a photo, etc. At Coolspotters, a "celebrity" can mean an author, a business leader, an athlete, a politician, an actor... basically anyone that the community finds interesting. We let the community tell us who their heroes are and what products, brands, people and places they're connected to. Coolspotters is not about the same 5 or 10 celebs that you see in every gossip magazine. We're about learning more about your role model's personal tastes and style - in a fun and entertaining way.

4) What are 3 things you can't live without?  
My family, HDTV, the Caribbean

5) What's a day in the life of Aaron like?

Most days start off with coffee (cream and sugar). I quickly check our analytics for the previous day. Spend time with our product team planning out upcoming features and developments. Correspond with our investors, partners, and user community. Spend time planning how to grow our current business, along with building our roadmap of new products.

6) Top 3 songs on your ipod?

Currently... Three Little Birds - Bob Marley - <http://coolspotters.com/songs/three-little-birds-by-bob-marley> Out of My Mind (live) - John Mayer - <http://coolspotters.com/songs/out-of-my-mind-by-john-mayer-Are the Good Times Really Over - Merle Haggard> - <http://coolspotters.com/songs/are-the-good-times-really-over-by-merle-haggard> the time?

7) If you were a celebrity what would be something that a fan would spot you with all the time?

My Adidas - <http://coolspotters.com/shoes/adidas-samba-shoes>

8) Favorite tech gadget (ipod, blackberry, iphone etc) and why?

I love my Apple iPhone. Besides being a brilliant product - it's a mobile phone, an iPod, and a web browser. All in a beautifully designed package. The creation of the iPhone should remind everyone that you can never corner the market on innovation. Apple came into an industry that had literally been stagnant for 10 years, they thought differently, and delivered a revolutionary product. They also forced every existing cell phone maker to actually start thinking about product design again.

<http://coolspotters.com/cell-phones/apple-iphone>

9) Would you ever endorse a product even if you didn't like it especially with your site spotting each and every item a celebrity is seen with?

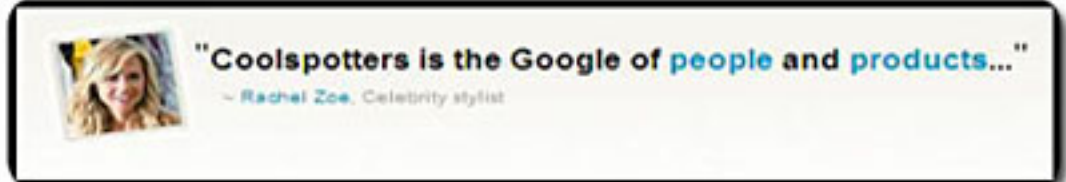
I personally would never do that although I understand how it happens given the dollars involved with today's endorsement deals. It happens all the time. CNBC did a feature on Coolspotters highlighting this very problem (<http://www.vimeo.com/1017788>) People care about authenticity. We don't care about what you pitch on a commercial or in an ad. We care about what you really use in your every day life. That's the only endorsement that really matters.

10) Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Hopefully making the world a better place through the technologies and products we build.

11) Best advice you have received?

A mentor of mine once told me to consider the following in every new venture in life: "Think Big! Never sell yourself short. Life is short."

I live by this short mantra.



12) Biggest recent splurge?

I recently bought a new watch - a Panerai Luminor. I am in good company, as leaders such as Bill Clinton and Bob Iger wear one. And of course, The Rock and Pierce Brosnan.

<http://coolspotters.com/watches/panerai-luminor>

13) Any other projects in the works?

Of course. We don't talk about products under development, but we love the mobile space. If you want instant-access to haute fashion, style, and the world's best products - you'll love what we're building. We also think the sports space is ready for some fresh thinking. Stay tuned! You can follow our company updates at: <http://fanzter.com>.

14) Who is your biggest inspiration?

John Douglas, Grayson, and Hanna (my children)

15) What is/are your favorite quote(s)?

Here are a few of my many favorites:  
"Get busy living, or get busy dying." - Andy Dufresne (character in the Shawshank Redemption)

<http://coolspotters.com/movies/the-shawshank-redemption>

"Why join the navy if you can be a pirate?" - Steve Jobs

<http://coolspotters.com/business-icons/steve-jobs>

16) Biggest misconception about you?

Just because I am from South Carolina doesn't mean I like the confederate flag.

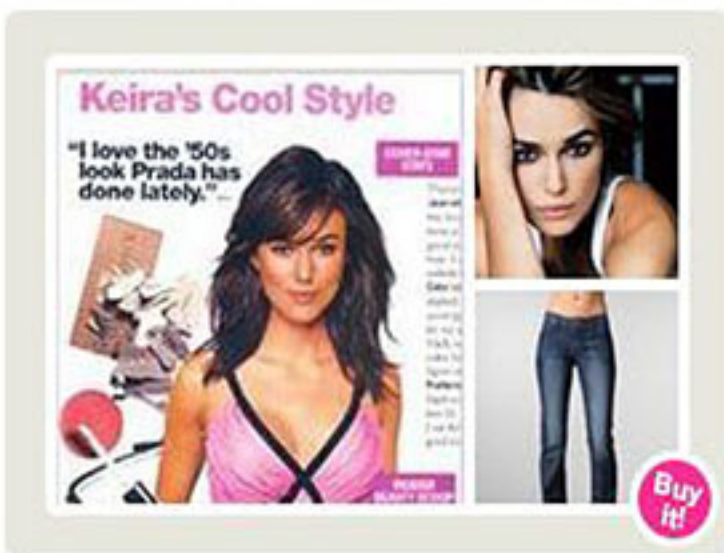


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17) Fave movie?

I have so many. Sneakers is one of my favorites - <http://coolspotters.com/movies/sneakers>

18) Any interesting stories about anything spotted on your website

According to the Coolspotters community, Jay-Z uses a MacBook Air even though he is the pitch man for HP. The power of our platform, to highlight that type of authenticity, is interesting.

<http://coolspotters.com/musicians/jay-z/and/computers/apple-macbook-air>

19) What do you think about the upcoming election?

I think our country needs a change, especially as it relates to our relationships around the world.

20) Any pet peeves?

Having to constantly remind someone to do something.

21) Any last words for our readers?

If you made it this far, thanks for reading. I also wanted to give a special shout out to Chlo and Gigi (loyal readers of yours). They are active members of Coolspotters and we love their energy and creativity. Thanks again and don't forget to visit Coolspotters.com to checkout the hottest fashion, style, and product trends.

