

## **PODCAST 49: HOW TO BOSS TWITTER WITH AUTHOR IAN SUTHERLAND**

**James:** Hello and welcome to Podcast #49 from the Self Publishing Formula.

**Speaker 2:** Two writers. One just starting out. The other a best seller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

**James:** It's just like David Letterman. If you're watching on video ... I should say if you're listening on audio, all our podcasts hopefully sound the same. Completely formatted and then easy for you to listen to. If you watch on video, you will know that we are gradually working our way towards a very presentable, enjoyable little ... Like a TV program. We're almost where we want to be now. We've got our own little studio, which is Mark's office in Salisbury. We've got a load of cameras. I'm basically David Letterman now.

**Mark:** Yes. I don't know who that makes me. I'll be Will Smith today.

**James:** Yeah. I suppose I'm James Corden now, am I? I don't know who took over from Letterman. Whoever.

**Mark:** Good question.

**James:** Some guy richer and funnier than me. Well, richer. Anyways. The point is that we can have a nice, relaxed chat and bring you your valuable podcasts.

On that note, I mentioned it from time to time ... We are acutely aware ... We think a lot about what goes into the podcast. We are aware that there's

lots of competition for your ears and your listening time and your watching time on YouTube videos so when we put together a podcast, we always want you to be able to take value away from it and for it to improve your lives in terms of your author career.

This episode, #49, is no exception. I guarantee to you that if you're an indie author, you are going to get value out of this episode. We should say probably what it's about. Really, it's a hangover from the detailed three-part series we did on mailing lists.

Mark, in the middle of that, we did an interview with a guy called Ian Sutherland and when we heard the interview, we decided that this needed its own episode, right?

**Mark:** We did, yeah. I listened to it after you did the intro and it's a good 50 minutes worth of value and we decided that we could edit it down a bit. It wouldn't be a good thing to do because there's so much packed into it. It's just better to put it out there and let people listen.

We're really pleased to put this together and the really cool thing that Ian's done is also put together a PDF for listeners to download, which summarizes some of the key takeaways and some additional points that will help you to really optimize your Twitter platform, especially when it comes to finding subscribers and selling books.

**James:** Yeah, so it's all about Twitter. I'll give you the download link now. We've got a PDF which has got a fantastic resource that Ian's very kindly put together for us. Look at all the links of everything he mentions in there and all those top tips you're going to hear about. This is organic Twitter so to give you the headline, this is Free ... What you can do for free on Twitter to increase your followers. He's got 100,000 followers now following his own techniques. He's written a book on the subject so he's an authority on it.

To get the PDF, if you go to [SelfPublishingFormula.com/download49](https://SelfPublishingFormula.com/download49) and you can get that PDF. We'll give that URL away during the end of the podcast.

Now during the interview, I should say I think we gave out a different URL during the interview. It was my idea that we were going to put this somewhere else. We'll make sure that's live as well, whatever it is. Don't worry, but download49 SelfPublishingFormula.com.

Mark, before we get into the interview, a quick catch up of where we are. You've been offline a little bit from SPF on and off over the last few weeks because you've been putting together another episode of In The Life of John Milton. Is this the one where we finally crossed genders?

**Mark:** Yes.

**James:** It is.

**Mark:** I thought it was so.

**James:** He looks good in skirts, doesn't he? He's a guy that can pull that off.

**Mark:** He's got the legs for it, yeah. I'm very, very pleased about that. I finished it in first draft on Friday, which was what I was aiming for so it's ... As we record this, it's with my proofreader in Canada. She'll be looking through it. I get it back tomorrow so Tuesday and then it will go out to my advance team and my copyeditor for two-week period and then after that we're looking to go live on the 15th of February. That's the plan at the moment.

I've done a bit of outreach to my list. They're very excited to hear this is coming. It's been a while since I've done a Milton book so really excited.

Launch is always fun and obviously make a big spike in that month's earnings so quite looking forward to getting that out there the next month.

**James:** When did you start this book?

**Mark:** I started writing it probably early November. Obviously we were busy actually before that. It would be September or October, I guess, but since we were so busy putting the 101 course together, I couldn't focus on it as much as I normally would so January has been head down, finish it off, and yes, I'm pleased with it.

It's 80,000 words. As I mentioned in previous podcasts, I also found that I kind of unintentionally written the next 20,000 words of the next book so I'll be jumping across to that. Might even start that later this week. The next book with a good 20,000 word headstart so that's always pleasing.

James: I'm full of jealousy. In terms of my book, I've had a couple of interesting, fun trips. In December, I visited an actual RAF Vulcan, a 1960's nuclear capable bomber. Four engines. I was entertained by the guys who look after the last flying version of this XH558 in Doncaster in England and they let me into the cockpit.

I did silly little things like sit in the seat and look over my shoulder to see where I could see and whether they could see each other, because I've written, in my mind, that this guy had just exchanged looks with somebody who he's friends with in the back of the jet. I needed to know that was possible and actually found out from the angles I had the originally, it wasn't possible so I made those small changes.

The sort of thing I know somebody's going to pick me up on in the book. Yesterday, I had a little drive around because funny enough and it's totally coincidentally that my book is centered geographically in this exact area where we are now, where Mark lives. As I say, a complete coincidence.

I started working on this book 10 years ago so I had a little drive around the villages of Porton and Amesbury around Boscombe Down from where the field where CND are going to be and where the camp is and so on so that was useful for me.

But as I keep saying, I'm laboring at the moment. Finding it hard going every time I sit down, I spend a lot of time going back over what I've done and slowly move forward and I'll find I've written 500 words in an hour rather than doing much more than that, but we are getting there. I'll keep you updated. I'll do more on my book.

We have got an interview. We recorded my feedback session with my editor. We'll polish that and we'll turn that around for a future podcast episode and I'll keep the blogs coming out shortly. I want to thank you to everybody who's signed up for my list. I've got 144 so nearly a hundred more than when we started talking about it the other week, which is brilliant. I hope you enjoy my emails. I'm going to do a couple more emails. We've got some more things to talk about including that trip to the Vulcan in the UK in future emails so thank you for signing up to my list.

Okay, right. Let's get you some value, right? That's what we promised. Ian Sutherland. Expert on Twitter. Like I say, we talked about paid advertising. We normally say about organic social media. Certainly with Facebook, that really your options are much more limited than they used to be because people like Mark Zuckerberg have worked out that they can make money through charging you access to the audience rather than you being able to do it organically. But Twitter is still open as long as you know what to do. Ian Sutherland is a man who knows what to do. Without further ado, let's hand over to Ian.

**Ian:** My name's Ian Sutherland and I'm a crime fiction author. I write a series of thrillers with a single character called Brody Taylor and he is a computer hacker so there's a technology element that flows through all the stories in

my thrillers and the most recent one, Taking Up Serpents, came out in October of last year.

James: Okay, and before we move on, you're a techie guy yourself?

Ian: Yeah, I have a background in technology hence the write what you know.

James: Yeah, yeah.

Ian: Although I'm not a computer hacker. Let's just be clear about that, but I have a good background in technology that's what's led me to write the thrillers that I have in the way that I have, but it's also what's led me into taking on Twitter and social media in such a technology-driven way.

James: Okay, yeah, so just in case the NSA are listening in on this, you're definitely not a computer hacker and there's nothing to see here. Okay, good.

Let's move onto the meat of this. Social media obviously is one of the channels. It's multi-channeled within itself, the broad term 'social media' that people use as a funnel for finding their readers. It's a complex area and it's broadly divided between what we used to call organic and paid reach. And then we all know that there's been this shift toward paid because the people that own these platforms have worked out how they're going to make their money and it's being able to contact a thousand friends very easily for free is much more difficult than it used to be.

We talk a lot about putting money into very targeted advertising campaigns and doing those carefully and checking your ROI. What's exciting about what you've come to us with is potentially some workarounds which are going back to those days of being able to use these

platforms organically for free, if you like, and finding positive results in terms of finding readers.

Is that more or less where you're coming from?

Ian: Very nice summary. Yeah, let's be clear. I use Twitter organically. I don't use any of the paid advertising features and we'll talk about that I'm sure this morning. But in regard to Facebook, like you, like Mark, I'm also a member of the SPF community.

I've taken the Facebook ads course and applied those principles so I do both in terms of trying to reach my readers and drive book sales, but all the way through even before I discovered Mark and advertising on Facebook, I have been using Twitter quite aggressively and really investigated it quite significantly and learnt a lot of best practice strategies from others outside of the author community. From other parts of the social media world and I've put all of those techniques together and I started to get real results. By real results, I mean driving engagement with readers, and with networking in the community right through to getting reviews and even book sales.

My number one view on Twitter is that it's nowhere near as good for driving book sales as doing advertising on Facebook. That said, all of the other things are really important. Having a big platform to reach people, to engage with people, and to drive awareness is just as important and so I can do that through Twitter.

James: I did the Twitter module as part of our course and I would concur completely with that. We worked really hard at it. We did everything in terms of optimization and I would 80% of my module is really about trying to optimize it rather than get it going because that's the only area you can try and get Twitter working for you. And even then we have had some results, but we've found it easier to get results with higher value items like the course than we have with lower value items like the book.

My instinct is and I think I said this in the course that Twitter is geared up for bigger corporations, its paid advertising platform, than it is for small users whereas Facebook works very nicely for that. I think we found the same thing there. I wouldn't rule out paid Twitter advertising forever. Because these platforms change all the time, but where we are now, if you've got something that's going to get us results on Twitter without using the paid advertising platform, we're all ears.

Ian: Okay. I worked all this out about, let's say, 18 months ago and I was starting to get some significant results. I was talking to other authors about this. I go to author meetups and those kind of things. I'm an active member of the Alliance of Independent Authors and quite a few people said to me, "Ian, why don't you just write this down? Because what you've got here, there's definitely some secret sauce."

In the end, I did. I wrote a book called *Advanced Twitter Strategies for Authors*. That was published in April of 2015 so it's well over a year old now. Although some of the tools I recommend, they're all still active, but some of the things have changed. Some of the pricing has changed. All of the techniques are completely still valid. That I have written down in that book.

There's a whole pile of things you can do on Twitter, but the first thing to do is to grow your follower base. The more followers that you have, the bigger your reach will be whenever you tweet and whenever you retweet others. That's the big thing. It's also the most visible thing so if you're trying to build an author platform and have some kind of credibility amongst your peers or if you're trying to get a book deal and people says, "Show us how many Twitter followers you have," all of those kind of things, then a large follower count works.

I have two Twitter accounts. I have my fiction account, which is IanSuth and that's got over 100,000 followers on it and I have my nonfiction account which is IanHSuth which has just over 50,000 on it..

James: Just to put that in perspective, 100,000 followers ... I've been a BBC reporter. I've got a podcast. I'm relatively high profile in small areas and my Twitter followings not over a thousand yet, but I've done nothing in terms of trying to boost it. But if you do nothing, if you sit there and do your job, if you like, it doesn't get you very far. You do obviously need something applied that you're going to talk to us about.

Let me just drop into the conversation now. Some of this is going to be reasonably complicated, but Ian has brilliantly done us a couple of really, really good instructional detailed PDF that we're going to give away as part of this podcast absolutely for free. All you need to do is go to [SelfPublishingFormula.com/TwitterIan](https://SelfPublishingFormula.com/TwitterIan). TwitterIan. It sounds like an insult, but it's not. T-W-I-T-T-E-R-I-A-N. TwitterIan and you can download those, but yeah, we'll give that address away a little bit later as well. Ian, how have you done this?

Ian: Well, I knew an electrician once called Ian and he was called Electric Ian so I think you've just given me a new nickname so thank you.

James: There you go.

Ian: How have we done this? There are whole things that go in concert together so let me just walk you through some of those. In terms of the number one thing that you can do to grow your follower account, because the whole point of someone following you ... It's not something you can control. Someone has to actively choose to follow you.

Why someone will follow you will be for lots and lots of different reasons. It could be because you're tweeting something interesting. It could be because you retweeted them. It could be because you liked one of their tweets.

The most effective way to have someone follow you is if you follow them in the first place. The more people that you follow, the more likely you are to get followers back. There's no reason for it, other than it's an unwritten rule of etiquette on Twitter. People generally will follow back. The rule of thumb is anywhere between 10 and 40% of the people that you follow will follow you back within a few days.

The secret to growing your follower count is to follow more people.

James: There is a hard limit, isn't it? How many people you can follow. Is it 2,000?

Ian: Yeah, so there's all sorts of limits. The official number is 1,000 but if you go anywhere near that you're in danger. If you try and follow more than a thousand people in a day, Twitter will step in and stop you and probably block your account. There's that limit.

There's a second limit which is, and this is what keeps it interesting ... Your follower count has to be within 10% of the people that you follow. If you've already followed 5,000 people, but the amount of people that follow you isn't within 10% of that, like 4,600 or whatever it might be, then Twitter will not let you follow another person, until either you unfollow a load of people and bring it back down or until you wait and a load of people follow you and you catch up.

There's a 10% rule. Up until the first 5,000 followers, that rule doesn't really apply. It only really kicks in at the 5,000 mark. It used to be 2,000, but it's now 5,000.

James: Okay.

Ian: After 5,000 you can just keep following people as long as you don't aggressively follow more than 1,000 people a day and even then I'd never recommend that. I'd recommend at most 600 or 700.

Then after 5,000, but then at that point, you need your follower account to be catching up. Following is the number one way to attract more followers. It's really straightforward.

But then it comes down to, well, who do you follow? Because that's important. There's no point in just following everyone blindly because as authors, we want the people that follow us to have some interest in what we do.

The advice I give in the book is to find some role models. By role model, I mean someone whose an author like you ... I'm a thriller author so find another thriller author. Maybe Mark Dawson and then look at his followers and then start following them. The logic being if someone has chosen to follow Mark, then they're interested. They may be interested in Mark for other reasons, of course, because of all the things Mark does, but there's lots of thriller authors out there.

Then if they follow you back, hopefully it's because there's some relevance. You'll always get some percentage of your follower base that probably isn't relevant and so on, but overall it's generally targeted. The targeting is one way of doing it.

The other way is to search on the hashtags that people tweet. If you look at people who tweet with the hashtag #thriller, #mystery, #crime for me. It could be romance. It could be anything depending on what genres you write in. Then you can follow those people because they're more likely to be interested in you as an author.

Following other people and then targeting who it is you follow by really following followers of role models is the ideal way to do this.

James: Okay, a couple of quick questions. One is in terms of etiquette. I'm guessing it's not a polite thing to do to follow a load of people, wait for them to follow you back, and then sneakily unfollow them.

Ian: That happens a lot. I'm not recommending that at all. The minute somebody follows me, I will never unfollow them, unless they unfollow me first. It's really straightforward.

James: Okay.

Ian: Because the reverse happens to you. People will follow you and then you follow them back and then they will unfollow you so there are people who do this all the time and it's just crazy. It doesn't achieve anything.

James: No.

Ian: No, I'm not recommending that in the slightest.

James: My other question is about automation because you're talking about some big numbers here.

If you were at the top end of that following a day 600 or 700 people. Have you got enough minutes in a day to do that?

Ian: It takes some time. Yeah, exactly. If you do this in the Twitter browser. Worse if you're on your phone, but even if you're on a browser on your computer and you try and do it through that Twitter web application, it would probably just take you a day to follow 300 or 400 people. It's not really helpful so there are third-party applications that help you with this and they can do two things. The two I recommend in the book, one is called Tweepy and the second one is called Manage Flitter. There are other tools that do this too.

What they do is they'll allow you to search out exactly as I've described the followers of role models or people who are tweeting in certain hashtags or searching on certain bios or whatever it might be. It'll give you a big, long list and then you get your finger over your thumb and you start clicking. As

you click, it moves up and your mouse moves over to the next one and so on.

There's no real automation other than doing that simply because the Terms of Service on Twitter prevent you from doing truly automated following. You have to be a human pressing the button on a computer to make a follow. All these tools have done is to make it as easy as possible to do that so that you can do many at one time.

James: Okay. I think that makes sense because I think from a Twitter user point of view, you don't want to make it too easy for people just to mass follow thousands of people. You want them at least to have done some work into working out that you are in a group that might be of use to them and vice versa.

Ian: Exactly. There were some tools about three or four years ago that did do all of this kind of stuff truly on autopilot, but they're all gone. They've all been banned by Twitter. The Twitter Terms of Service and through putting apps on their API stops all those things happening anymore so that doesn't happen anymore.

James: Okay. Ultimately, we're talking about trying to get people onto our mailing lists and we'll move onto that in a little bit.

The foundation of the technique that you've used to get to a 100,000 followers, Ian?

Ian: That's the most effective way of attracting followers, but there are others. I recommend doing all of these things. The other things that you should do, one is tweet a lot. It's really straightforward, but tweet a lot. I recommend some ways of doing that. Number one, obviously you want to tweet about yourself, of course, but if all you do is tweet, "Buy my book. Buy my book. Buy my book," over and over and over again, soon you'll get unfollowed.

Actually the skill is to add value to other people who might be following you. I do that through tweeting lots of interesting content that exists on the Internet. Either stuff that I've found manually and organically, like my own blog posts from the past. I have those set up in a queue that drip feeds these out on a regular basis.

Mark uses Meet Edgar and a few people use that. I don't actually recommend that in the book, not because it's a bad tool. Just it wasn't around when I wrote the book, but Meet Edgar has pre-populated queues of content that you can then sign up to and then it will drip feed those out onto your timeline.

James: Yeah.

Ian: That's quite interesting. Some of the hard work's been done.

James: I think we've got the gist of it that if you just constantly say, "Buy my book," people are going to unfollow you. I think we understood that. Did you say then what you do use for scheduling tweets if you don't use Meet Edgar?

Ian: The tool I use is a tool called SocialOomph. It's been around a while. There's lot of tools. HootSuite. Buffer. So on. There's lots of these tools. The reason I like SocialOomph is it takes a queue-based approach which means that you can fill a queue and you can have multiple queues in SocialOomph. I have a promotional queue so those 'buy my book' tweets do exist. They're a bit more sophisticated. I have them as a review quotes so they're more subtle. They're less pushy. I don't want to be spamming people. Then I have a queue of my old blog posts. Evergreen-type blog posts that will drive traffic back to my website and then I have a queue of interesting genre-related stuff and then I have the best queue which is one that's automatically filled from whenever websites that I have chosen write a new article or a blog post.

The way that's done is through RSS feeds so another technical term, but RSS is an old-school Internet technique where you can use a reader, an application on your computer or your phone, tell it about the RSS feeds or websites you're interested and rather than visit all of those websites, every time they post something new it just appears in your reader like a newsfeed.

That was the original use of it, but what we do with SocialOompf is you tell SocialOompf about those RSS feeds and then every time something is posted on those websites, it pops it into my queue on SocialOompf in the format of a tweet. It has the title of the blog post or the article, has the URL link to it, and I add a hashtag and that's all done automatically. Fills up a queue and then those drip out over time onto my timeline. Obviously, the websites I've chosen are relevant to me as a thriller author in the case of my fiction account or about social media in my nonfiction account.

James: This is starting to explain some things. In our previous existence with our video production and I used to write a blog and a couple of posts just took off and caught people's eyes. They're a year old and to this day, I will get two or three retweets a day for those posts and I think it's because the person's retweeted it has put it onto their blog, there's an RSS feed for somebody who follows them and does exactly what you've just said. There's probably a thousand retweets of a couple of those blog posts on how much to pay for video production type blogs.

Ian: The point of doing all of that then is it makes my timeline and the people who apply the techniques from the book roughly end up being around 80% adding value, I mean, truly adding value to people because you're tweeting fresh, interesting content, which gives you a right, buys you the right to do 20% promotional tweets and even those are done in a ... Well, the way I do it certainly is in a more subtle way so that you're not just pushing and saying, "Buy my book."

Getting that 80/20 balance I think's really, really important, otherwise you just turn people off.

James: Choosing those subject areas.

For a thriller writer, you're choosing areas about other thriller writers or books or are you choosing things about the actual detail of like espionage?

Ian: Yeah. What I do is I look for websites that do book reviews, particularly if they do thriller books and there are some of those out there and blogs. Book review sites are really good. Other authors who post a lot that I find interesting. I choose their websites and so on and so on.

Basically, it's any website that you would personally go to and occasionally you see that you're reading a post and it says, "Click to tweet," and if you would do that on a regular basis on that website, it's a good candidate for an RSS feed into SocialOompf to go out automatically on your behalf.

James: Okay. Before we move on, at what point did you look at Twitter and thought, "This is an underutilized tool"? Because the thing you're talking about, the energy you're putting into it is far and away beyond above what most people are doing.

When did this happen for you?

Ian: What happened to me is I published my first two books back in 2014, August of 2014. I did all of the best practice that was around at the time. I had a first novel. I had a prequel novella which I made free, perma free. In those days, I wasn't doing enough to build my mailing list. I've fixed that since and we'll come onto that. Facebook posts weren't really working. It was around the time that they were starting to play with the algorithm so that if you put stuff on your page it wouldn't necessarily be seen with people.

I just looked at Twitter. The great thing about Twitter is that there is no restrictions. You can follow anyone and anyone can follow you. There is no restrictions so from that perspective it made sense to me that it's a good area to focus in on plus it is more now, but in those days it was less image intensive. Something like Instagram is all about the image. Or Pinterest, which I'm no good at graphics.

It was because of all of those things I ended up focusing in on it. I first tried to look at scheduling tweets and I looked at things like HootSuite and yes you can pre-schedule tweets in HootSuite. And it's great, but the problem is, you have to pick a date and a time and put it in there.

There is an ability on the paid version to load spreadsheets up so you can bulk upload them in advance, but if you have the same tweet in there twice, it stops you doing it so then I got into this mechanism where I was bulk uploading and then a few weeks later, I'd be bulking uploading the same ones again and it was just becoming cumbersome so I put my technical hat back on and I just started doing some research and seeing what else was out there.

That's when I discovered Buffer, which is a great step forward because it has a queue-based approach. You simply just fill a queue, but it didn't allow you to automatically recycle updates and it only had one queue. Eventually I stumbled across SocialOomf and that's why I ended up focusing in on SocialOomf because it gave me the ability to segregate my queues, the types of content I was tweeting, drip feeding them at different times. I have some queues that drip feed, that drip once a week. No more than that. Others that drip every two hours. Overall, it just creates a nice active timeline.

For me, it was a case of having to and I was sure that Twitter could get the reach out more and then after that, I got hooked and then I started trying to figure out how to get more followers.

James: Just on frequency then, you mentioned one of your queues, every couple of hours.

How many tweets a day do you do on average?

Ian: It depends. On those kind of tweets, I'm probably tweeting around 40 or 50 times a day so that's quite a lot, but I haven't included retweets in there and I haven't included something we'll come to in a minute which is how I attract email subscribers to my email list.

But the value-added content plus some promotional stuff, around ... Maybe 10 promotions emails a day and 30 or 40 interesting content is going out.

James: Okay. I know it's a bit of an art rather than a science, frequency, and you have to make a judgment about it and I guess ultimately you have to look at the results you're getting and unfollows to really try and spear and work out where your sweet spot is in terms of frequency.

You talk about an 80/20% so 80% should be of interest, of value, to people and 20% should also be of interest and value to people, but it's basically selling your product or letting people know that you've got a book.

Ian: Yeah, yeah, absolutely right. If you get that right, then the volume just means ... A half life of a tweet on Twitter is getting shorter and shorter. It becomes a much busier time so it actually pays you to tweet more because you've got more chances of catching somebody on their timeline than you do in any other way.

If you only tweet once or twice a day and the odds on you ... You've got a thousand followers, the odds on all thousand of your followers seeing are pretty slim. If you want to get the word out in a nice way, then you have to increase your frequency.

The downside of that is if you're only tweeting with your family and friends, your timeline starts overtaking their and you have to accept that they may not like it.

James: I should say it's @jamesblatch, by the way, in case anybody wants to follow me.

Ian: I'll follow you now.

James: There you go. Thank you, Ian. Get yourself a podcast and then tell people to follow you. We need to gravitate towards mailing lists, which obviously is the ultimate aim for us as authors is to try and get names onto our mailing list which is certainly a significant aim for us.

How does this mesh with that and when do you do that transition? That's part of the 20% of tweets, I guess?

Ian: No. It's special. This isn't in the book, but anyone who reads the book can subscribe to the mailing list in the back and then I send you another chapter. I will have a second edition at some point. This is a technique I discovered after writing the book in April 2015. It works really well. The idea is fairly straightforward in principle. Let's be clear. What I'm talking about doing is using Twitter to ask somebody to join my mailing list. In the same way on Facebook ads, we have lead gen ads and the link takes you either to a landing page or you can within Facebook, the Facebook user can give you their Facebook email address and it automatically flows through to your mailing list.

It's the exact same thing on Twitter, but being done organically and not being doing through Twitter advertising, which is essentially where you explored when you put the Twitter advertising course together. Let me do it from a reader's point of view. I'll try and describe it that way. I'm a reader and for whatever reason, I have chosen to follow Ian Sutherland, @IanSuth. Maybe it's because he followed me first. Maybe it's because he retweeted me. Maybe it's because he wrote something

interesting and I thought, "You know what? I'll follow this guy." I follow IanSuth and great. End of.

About an hour later, I'll actually receive a reply tweet or a mention tweet to me from Ian and it's in a special format, but I notice it as a reader because it's a reply. If you're a normal user on Twitter, your notifications area, you see the number go up and so it really stands out. It's not a direct message, because there's far too much spam in direct messages, if you've looked at your direct message feed. This is an @reply. I see the @reply and it says, "Reader," whatever my Twitter handle is, "Thank for following me. Would you like a free book? Here's a free book." It's actually written more eloquently than that.

James: I think for those people who are watching this on YouTube, I might be able to bring this up because I have followed you and I'm going to scroll back through my replies because I did notice it come up, but carry on and I'll see if I can bring it into screen at some point.

Ian: On top of it just being a tweet, it's actually in a special format and it looks quite interesting. It's got a graphic in it. It's got some words around it and the technical term is it's a Twitter lead gen tweet, which I know you know about because that's what you used in the advertising side. I see that as the reader and I think, "Oh, okay, yeah, maybe I will have a nice book for free." There's two things I can do. I can either hit subscribe and there's a button right within Twitter so I could be on my phone and press that button and it will say, "Do you want to share the email address you've registered to Twitter with Ian?" And I say, "Yes," and that's it. Done. I've now joined Ian's mailing list and within a minute or two, I'll automatically get an email with links to the book for me to download from BookFunnel. That's the process from a normal follower, a reader's perspective. Did you find the tweet?

James: Yes, I did. I found it and when I clicked on it, it seemed to take me to your website.

Ian: Yeah, there's two things. I learned from experience that just relying on the Twitter lead gen card, some people are hesitant to click on the subscribe button within Twitter. They look at it suspiciously. Some people are fine with it. What I've done is also include another URL within the tweet text which is a backup and that takes you to a landing page on my website where you can then sign up in the old-fashioned way.

James: Yeah, okay.

Ian: I get roughly a 50% through Twitter lead gen cards directly and 50% through the landing page, but 100% from Twitter.

James: That's automated, obviously?

Ian: Right. Let's go back to how have I set this up. The first thing to do is to create the lead gen style tweet. You actually have to go into the advertising side of Twitter.

You have to go in there. Register your account. Do that. I believe you have to register a credit card, but you don't have to spend any money so it's okay.

Once you've done that, that then opens up the ability to create Twitter cards, one of which is a lead gen card. You have to do that step first. Create a lead gen card and depending on your mailing list provider, whether you've got MailChimp or ConvertKit or whatever, then the way that you link that to your mailing list. All of the mailing list providers provide you the instructions for how to do this. You've got to provide the graphic and the text and that's that.

That's the lead gen card created and that takes care of the flow through to your mailing list.

I obviously have a landing page as a backup so I need to have a landing page to send people to and then the last thing is you have to then set up the automation so that it automatically sends the welcome tweet, I call it, to the reader within an hour or so of them following you.

There are a couple of tools on the market that will do this for you. One is called Sendible and the other one is called Audience. There're probably others as well, but there's two that I'm fully aware of, but you have to pay for these. These aren't free, but if you don't that ... They do other things, these tools, but with one of their capabilities is the ability to send this mention tweet. There are hundreds and hundreds of tools that will do auto DMs so auto direct messages, but that's pretty much pointless. You need this to be an @reply for it to work as a Twitter lead gen card.

If you use one of those two tools or find another one, then actually what happens is within those tools, you then set up tweet variations. I then set up about 20 or so different versions, different text versions. Different ways of saying, "Hello, would you like a free book?" The reason for that is so that you're not tripping Twitter up and then it chooses them randomly each time you have a new follower and that's so you're not tweeting the same stuff.

James: Is that where you put the mix of links that go to your landing page or the Twitter lead card?

Ian: No, no, all 20 have landing page and the lead gen card in them, yeah?

James: Okay.

Ian: The Twitter lead gen card at the end of the day, all it really is is another URL. It's just that Twitter recognized a special format URL, then displays it in a different way as a lead gen card so essentially you're composing a tweet with two URLs in it.

James: Okay.

Ian: That's the way I do it.

James: Okay.

Ian: Then you do that and then every time someone follows you, it randomly chooses one of the 20 variations and then sends that in an @reply format so they see it in their notifications.

The ratio you get of followers to email subscribers varies. The range is between around 3-15%. It's not a high conversion, but bearing in mind, other than the use of the automation tool, you're not paying for this. You're not paying for Twitter advertising here. As long as you're driving enough followers on a daily basis. If you're getting 100 followers a day, yeah? Then actually that should convert down to anywhere between 3 and 15 new email subscribers.

Unlike Facebook ads or perhaps Twitter ads, you can't scale it much more than that, simply because there's that limit of how many people you can follow in the first place and all the traffic that you put out to attract to new followers to then hit them with a welcome tweet to then get that ratio. It's a nice technique, but over a year, if you're getting 10 email subscribers a day, it builds up.

My email list is well over 5,000 and I've been doing this for a year all through Twitter.

James: Brilliant. In terms of tracking that, obviously if you're using the Twitter ads platform, you get all their analytics. I'm assuming they still work despite the fact you haven't actually paid for this campaign. Can you still use it to track how many people clicked on the links?

Ian: You can track that, yeah. You can track how many click on the link, so then you just compare that to how many actually subscribe.

James: Yeah, you can do that.

Ian: Yeah, so you can do those kind of things, but you can't do much more. They don't open up the full demographics that you see when you're doing the advertising.

James: Okay. You do need to set up a Twitter ads campaign account. In the course we recommend you create a Google AdWords account so that you can access some stuff, which you're going to use for free without running a campaign. Google AdWords is a bit naughty because it forces you to set up a campaign as part of your setup, but you don't. You can pause it immediately so it doesn't send even a single impression out.

I know some people are hesitant about this, but you know what? It's Twitter and it's Google. These are not corporations that are going to rip you off. At least, not in that way. They're not going to force you or trick you into spending money so don't hesitate about that. You can put your credit card up, your details.

Set up your Twitter ads campaign and never run a campaign and apart from getting the odd email from them saying, "Why don't you run a campaign?" That will be the only downside of that so don't worry about that, I would say.

Ian: Agreed. Agreed. That's how it works. It's a very nice, organic way to drive traffic through to your mailing list and then from there, it's business as usual. If you've got all your other tweeting going on. You're doing your regular following every day. You'll drive new followers, which will then convert, some of those into email subscribers.

James: Yeah, obviously in your book you go into a great amount of detail about this and people can follow that. I'm very happy for you to plug that in so just give us the details of your book again.

Ian: Yeah, so the book is called Advanced Twitter Strategies for Authors under my name, Ian H Sutherland, on Amazon. Everywhere. On all platforms.

James: Yeah, on all good retailers. You've very kindly put together a crib sheet to go along with this interview so people can follow it and there has been quite a lot of detail in there and as I say the address for that, if you want to download that crib sheet, just pop over to [SelfPublishingFormula.com/TwitterIan](http://SelfPublishingFormula.com/TwitterIan), which is Ian's new name. It's Ian without two 'i's. Ian with one 'i'. I-A-N.

Ian: Ian. I-A-N, yes, absolutely. There's one last thing I'd like to say because having talked through all of this, right? I'm very keen to get across. I've talked a lot about automation and how automation can help you, but if that's all you do, as far as I'm concerned, you've failed because yes, you've got the word out. You've got a bigger following. You've got some subscribers, but you absolutely still need to remember that Twitter is a social media place and you have to be social.

I still go on every day and I make time every day to interact with people personally because of all of the automation I do, my tweet stream ... I can't keep up. I couldn't possibly keep up with it. With a 100,000 followers, it just refreshes all the time. I use TweetDeck, but you can use HootSuite in its free mode and you can set up columns filtered on certain things like the mentions to you. You can filter on lists so I've set up lists of people I really am keen to know what they tweet about amongst my 100,000, I really want to know about those people and what they're saying so that I can interact in conversations.

I strongly recommend that you don't turn yourself into a bot, which is what this is entirely capable of doing. That you remember that it's very important to engage personally with people by talking and replying to people and also initiating conversations.

James: Yeah, and there's absolutely no excuse for not doing that. I can tell you from my old job that I would occasionally stand next to and interview celebrities and I'd see their phone when ... These people have hundreds of thousands of followers. Sometimes a million and their mentions are chaotic. You can't ... every time they breathe at their Twitter account, a thousand people immediately reply to them, but each one of those, at least the good ones, the kind of people who are doing ... If I was interviewing them, it's probably because they were out there doing something in the community. They'll get on there and they'll interact and the ones that catch their eye that they think are quite funny, they'll go back to them.

In the early days, Stephen Fry used to reply to every single person that tweeted him and that included me in the early days of Twitter. I've got a reply from Stephen Fry on my mentions list.

Ian: for us to get one now. I believe he stopped using Twitter.

James: He has. You won't get one now. He stopped before he ... Once he went north of a million followers. He's now north of two million and as you say, he's come off for his own mental health reasons, I think, for his particular circumstance. Those guys can do it. You can do it as well and absolutely keep it a lively and engaging place and that's going to be the heart of why people would want to follow you in the first place.

Yeah, that's great. It's a detailed area, Ian, and I know we've skimmed across it really, but you know what? For me, where I am sitting and I'm sure for our audience, it's been gold dust, really. It's been really valuable.

Ian: One other thing though in case people are daunted by all of this. Yes, you can buy the book and read the book and try and I give you guidance in how to set all this up.

But just so you know, I am launching a service this month that I've been in beta test for the last four months with 12 authors. One of which is Mark. I've figured out a way to scale these techniques so that I can do it on behalf of other authors in a way that scales. Still leaves me time to write so I can get

all this stuff set up and so on. I've proved it over the last four months for the 12 authors. We've grown their accounts by a total of 75,000 followers.

James: Wow.

Ian: Which is about 1,500 followers per author per month. It's quite significant. That's a new service that's being launched towards the end of January and if anyone's interested, it's at [AuthorPlatformPsychic.com](http://AuthorPlatformPsychic.com).

James: I wasn't sure how secret that was. I wasn't going to mention it, but I know you've been doing this in the background and working with these hand-selected authors to test the platform, but you're going public with that now.

Ian: I'm going public in pretty much two to three weeks it'll be live. There's a waiting list there at the moment so if anyone's interested they can sign up. It looks like it works. It looks like it'll be a valuable service.

James: This will obviously be a subscription model for you?

Ian: Yeah, absolutely. It's a monthly subscription model and there's different levels depending on how far people want to take it. They don't have to do the whole thing, but it includes the ability to drive email subscribers.

James: Okay, again we've got the stuff you've given us for the download, but if we make sure all that's included, that link and that Twitter ad, we'll make sure that's all there so if people want more details of where to go for that, to subscribe to that, to get the book, etc. as I say, [SelfPublishingFormula.com/TwitterIan](http://SelfPublishingFormula.com/TwitterIan).

Ian: Perfect.

James: Twitter Ian, it's been brilliant.

Ian: My new name.

James: We had a slight issue. We had to get you scrabbling from your house to your parents' in-laws' house which is where you are now. You had this really cool Jaws poster behind you and now you've got ...

Ian: I did.

James: ... what I'm sure is a fascinating 17th century scene with chickens, I think, behind you.

Ian: It's the Battle of Rorke's Drift.

James: Oh, is it? The South African campaigns, is that right?

Ian: Yeah. I don't know.

James: If you're watching on YouTube, you can see this. If you're not watching on YouTube, you don't know what we're talking about except for

Ian is going out of his way to make sure this interview happened today.

Ian Sutherland. I told you you'd get value out of this episode. Some of the tricks quite intuitive and simple. Others you'd not necessarily would think about, but clearly effective, right?

Mark: Yeah, I'm a good demonstration of that. I beta tested his new service for him and as he said in the episode, I think I added double the size of the list, up to about 10,000 over the course of the experiment, but also most importantly for me, added a couple of hundred subscribers, all completely automated at no cost. Very efficient.

If you can get a few ways like that to passively build your list so Facebook being one way. Twitter being another way. Before you know it, you can find you've got 500 a month, 600 a month. Then when you add in paid

advertising and organic growth through back of book links, product pages, you can very quickly find you're up to four figures a month and that's when you start to really start rolling.

Yeah, really, really useful. Definitely something that you should consider adding to your armory.

James: Yeah, definitely. If you want the detail on that, all the breakdown of what Ian was talking about and some step-by-step guidelines in how to move forward with that, you can get the PDF download we've put together for you for this episode. If you go

to [SelfPublishingFormula.com/download49](https://SelfPublishingFormula.com/download49). All one word. Download49.

Yeah, Ian mentioned he's got this service he's developing at the moment, a bespoke one-to-one service that you can subscribe to if you contact Ian.

He's trialed it. You were one of the beta he used there, Mark. Obviously he's going to charge for this in the future and he's got a book as well. All of that information you'll find on the download as well.

Look, that's it for this episode. That's 49. We'll get to our half century next week, which will be ... I don't know. In cricket you just stand there very politely and wave your bat in the air for half a century. Should we have party poppers or?

Mark: Oh, we're much more reserved than that.

James: Yes, we are.

Mark: Perhaps we'll just ... We'll motor on gracefully.

James: We'll motor on. We may look very similar.

Mark: Probably will.

Okay, thank you very much indeed for listening. Don't forget the download. Visit our webpage [SelfPublishingFormula.com/download49](https://SelfPublishingFormula.com/download49). We'll see you next week.

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