

PODCAST 34 HOW TO MAKE YOU BOOK BEAUTIFUL WITH BRAD AND BRAD FROM VELLUM

James: The self-publishing formula has launched an amazing contest for one of our listeners to win \$3,000 worth of professional author services from Reedsy.com. Reedsy is an online marketplace where writers can find editors, book designs, publicists, professional marketers, and even ghost writers. One winner will get \$3,000 to spend on those professional services found at Reedsy. There are also three runners-up prizes for a free book cover design worth up to \$600. To enter, simply visit SelfPublishingFormula.com/Reedsy. That's R-E-E-D-S-Y. You'll have a chance to spread the word about the contest and each person who enters using your link increases your own chances of winning.

Hello and welcome to Podcast #34 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: Hello, here we are again and it is a delight to be with you. James Blatch and Mark Dawson on the Self Publishing Formula podcast. Thank you very much for listening week in, week out. We love hearing from you in our Facebook groups and on Twitter. We're [@selfpubform](https://twitter.com/selfpubform) on Twitter. You can join our Facebook group. We have a growing array of Facebook groups, don't we, Mark?

Mark: We do. We have four at the moment, I think, with possibly another one or two to come.

James: Yup. You can join our 101 group which is a great place to be if, like me, you are starting out on the road to being a world-class Booker prize-

winning author, which is what I'm doing. Oh, if you want to make a decent career out of writing books as well and you're doing that already, you can join our self-publishing group which talks specifically about marketing because you experience guys like you Mark. You know how to format books. Interestingly, you know what things like format mean, which until about a couple of months ago I had no idea.

I'm now suddenly tonight ... This is quite a historic day. Should I tell people I just finished my novel?

Mark: I think you've already done it.

James: Yeah. I've just finished my novel.

Mark: Yes.

James: A lot of pushing from ... I love a deadline and I need a deadline and I got one from Mark. He basically booked me an editor and so that was that. I did a little mini-retreat. We had a lot of work and I locked myself away in a hotel for a couple of nights and I can suddenly see the attraction of these retreats. I think a lot of writers do them and it might be an area to explore at some point. We actually did speak to someone recently and I can't remember who it was top of my head on the podcast who was at a retreat at the time, but I can see the attraction of that.

I have more or less rewritten what was a 52,000-word novel at the time. I'd hacked it down a little bit before I started on Friday. It's now a 66,000-word completed novel. Novella, I suppose. I rewrote probably 75% of that. I've done a lot of words in a few days. Yeah, away from the house, away from the children and all that distraction and carnage was very good for me.

Mark: I've never done that before. I've never actually been away on a retreat, but it's a good idea, I think, in principle.

James: I think you and I are both thinking about potentially working away from our houses. We've both got children and quite busy houses and the best will in the world ... You don't want to be that person who's grumpy to your children all the time and says, "I can't do this and that."

The better way is actually to remove yourself for periods of the day. Mine might actually just be in the garden. I might get one of those drop-in sheds with a stove in it and so on and a skull and crossbones so the children know not to approach during the day.

Mark: Yes. I've actually told you this. I've taken my office this afternoon.

James: Oh, you have?

Mark: I have. I booked an office and spent the rest of the afternoon buying a desk and now I'm buying duplicates of everything that I've got here so a new microphone, a new display for the monitor, all that kind of stuff. There's enough space for a little studio in there as well. Might be doing a bit more Facebook Live stuff in the next few months.

James: That's great, Mark. I'm impressed. How much time do you think you're going to spend? How often are you going to use it?

Mark: I think I'll be there almost every day. If the house is empty, I'll probably stay at home because I quite like working here and I can go for runs whenever I want. It's quite nice to break the day up, but when the house isn't empty, I do need a clear space. I think there's a good chance I'll be there three or four times a week.

James: That's great. We do have a special edition of the podcast coming up soon. I trialed a little while ago where I asked eight or nine authors in a row the same set of questions. One of the questions is where do you write? A lot of them write in bed, I was surprised to hear. I think I'd get a bad back sitting in bed writing, but people sit cross-legged on their bed.

Mark: They're young.

James: They're young. Yeah, of course. They're nimble and we're not. Anyway.

Today is novel finish today, which I'm thrilled about. Obviously it's just the beginning of the journey for the novel. It goes to a developmental editor now who's almost certainly going to write copious notes on it that I'll have to prepare myself for. That's another thing we can talk about and as we go into the mode this autumn talking a lot about new authors and starting out so I think we'll talk a bit about the editing process as I go through it. I'm going to blog this as well, but understanding your role in the editing process, your role as an author. There's a professional, detached approach that you've got to take in terms of understanding the comments being made about your book are going to make it better. They're not personal comments about you. It doesn't mean that the book is bad in the sense that you think I'm rubbish, not good or anything you do can be improved, right? The top golfers in the world have coaches. The top tennis players in the world have coaches.

Getting to their professional level of understanding that you can improve is where I need to be, but it's easy for me to say, Mark, I've yet to see some red pen on my novel.

Mark: Yes, I'm quite looking forward to that. I think that's going to be very amusing. We'll see how it comes back. Jenny is the editor who's going to be taking the first pass, a developmental edit for the book and she is someone I've worked with before, is very thorough, has a great eye, and has made some really excellent comments that have really improved some of my most recent books.

Then the editor we might pass it onto afterwards is a little less ... How can I say? Fairly brutal. I think he would accept that. Polite but brutal. Firm,

maybe. That will be an interesting experience as we put the novel through that one as well, but no, it's really exciting.

You've done amazingly well. 66,000 words you told me you've written over the weekend which makes me look positively pedestrian at the moment so that's very impressive.

James: It's ridiculous. I've just been sitting down literally from dawn 'til dusk, probably doing 15 hours for three days of writing, because I'm at the point now with the novel where I know it inside out, although I've had those times where I've gone out. Had a swim at some point just to try and get myself to the next point. I'm just a bit stuck on the structure. At one point, I did that trick where you got to a point where you're just not really sure how to ...

You deliberately write yourself into corners sometimes. That's the whole point, isn't? Some type of a good story they get to an exciting lead and it becomes a dead end and then you move on. I was at one of those points where I literally wrote the character into a bath, lying back, thinking, "What do we do now?" It was a eureka moment. It came in the dialogue I was writing came the next steps. All these things that you writers are used to and know about is a journey for discovery for those of us who are starting out and it's fun.

Mark: Yes.

James: Love it. Absolutely love it. Anyway, I say that now. I was stressed beyond belief three days ago. Roller coaster.

A really good one for me tonight, Mark. We're going to talk about formatting, because obviously it is literally one of the steps that is coming up shortly for me after the next few stages of editing and that will be getting the book formatted and all that good stuff about getting it into

people's hands. One of the formatting options, and we've talked about this before, a couple of them are free to use.

One of the formatting options that you do pay for is Vellum. It's not very expensive, actually. \$200 for lifetime use of Vellum and I think \$30 per book, if you want to do it that way. I like the look of Vellum a lot.

When I say the look of Vellum, that is the correct expression to use, because it's a beautiful bit of software. It's no surprise at all when you hear the two guys, who are confusingly both called Brad, who founded Vellum ... It'll be no surprise to you at all to find out where they worked and how they met when you see the aesthetic nature of Vellum.

Let me just ask you before we get into the interview, Mark, have you used Vellum?

Mark: I haven't, no. I've always relied on a third party to do my formatting. Ever since I started it was the studio in Australia called Polgarus Studios and I hooked up with them because Hugh Howey had used them before and I thought if it's good enough for Huge Howey, it's probably good enough for me.

I've been working with them for the last four or five years and it has its pros and cons. They're extremely professional, but if you want to make quick changes to manuscripts, it can be a little bit of a delay that's involved there. I am interested in looking at other options.

As we go towards the new course, I want to lay out all of the options available for writers from the free ones like the Reedsy editor and Scrivener, of course, can compile into the various formats, to the other ones with things like Vellum at the top end, with producing really gorgeous books. I'm very interested in what they have to say to you.

James: I've got on my list of things to do in the next few days is record a screen flow of using Vellum. One of the things about Vellum as the Brads explain in a moment, is that you can download this software and use it for

free. It's only literally when you upload, the point at which you need to have paid for it. You can practice with it.

Mark: Fiendish.

James: Yeah, it's clever. You can practice with it. You can see how good your book looks and great for us because I can do some nice screen flows to show how it works and see my novel looking at least aesthetically looking nice. Here's one more exciting thing to say about this interview just before we hand over to it. This is going to be our very first video interview. The two Brads and I accidentally, it has to be said, at the beginning found ourselves on camera. All the podcasts go to YouTube, to our YouTube channel. If you search for Self Publishing Formula on YouTube, you'll find our channel. Every podcast that we've done is on there.

At the moment, the visual side of that on YouTube is the slide that our third amigo, John Dyer, produces, but for this one, in a moment when the interview starts, you're going to see us in all our glory and by all our glory, I mean me, unshaven.

Mark: You did have your clothes on, did you?

James: I did have my clothes on, but I haven't slept very well for three days, as you know, writing my novel and I look like Ernest Hemingway on a bad morning without the writing skill.

Mark: I think we've got to cut this out of it. We've better cut that, James. I don't think the world is ready for horrors of that kind of description.

James: I am clothed. The only thing you need to know. The Brads look so cool on camera that we've kept that on there.

It's Brad and Brad, first of all. Let's just get this clear before this starts. We've got Brad W.

Brad W.: Yes.

James: And Brad Andalman.

Brad A.: Yeah.

James: And Brad Andalman, if you're watching this on YouTube is the one with the very cool background. You appear to have a motorbike in your kitchen?

Brad A.: Who doesn't? Yeah, it's true. I've got my motorcycle in my kitchen.
James: Exactly, good. Okay.

Brad A.: It's all one room over here so that's all we can do.

James: It looks very cool anyway. If I'd known we were going to record this, by the way, I would have shaved, but next time.

Okay, let's talk about Vellum. Do you know you're talking to the right person? Because today is the day I finished my first novel. Well, it goes to the editor today for the first time.

Brad A.: Congratulations.

James: Thank you very much.

Brad W.: Awesome.

James: Inevitably, it's actually going to be transmitted tomorrow morning because I haven't quite finished it, but you know how it is. Today is the day. I'm in the market for this and we have talked about Vellum in our 101 course and we've given an instruction for how to go through it and so on. I know it's a very, very highly regarded tool, but enough of the praise. Let's here the practical side of things.

Does one of the Brads want to tell me what Vellum is and we'll get going from there?

I should be more specific. I can't just say one of the Brads. That's ridiculous, okay. Let me make a choice then. Brad Andalman, because you were about to talk.

Brad A.: Yeah, Vellum is software that we wrote. It's for the Mac only. We wanted to allow authors to be able to format their books and have them easily create beautiful ebooks for a variety of online platforms so for iBooks, for Amazon, Nook, Kobo, Google Play, etc. and to really give them the control so that they don't have to go to someone else or learn a lot of complicated coding things. They can do it all and really use the principles of book design and beautiful typesetting to create ebooks that they're proud of.

James: You do use the beautiful when you're describing it, about creating beautiful ebooks and it does look like a lovely bit of software. Let's go back a little bit. For those of us who are just starting out, there's a lot of bewildering things that you need to do after you've written a book in Word or Scrivener or wherever it is.

And if you'll treat me like a complete novice here and say that I don't really know where to start with formatting. I know what it looks like in Scrivener and I know what it looks like when I've exported it as a Word document. What needs to happen to it and what should happen to it? Perhaps Brad W. could do this one?

Brad W.: The answer is it depends. For authors who really want to have their book available in as many places as possible, the answer is going to be different for Amazon than it is, say, for iBooks or for Kobo or for U.S. readers for Nook. That's one thing that really makes it hard. You need to learn not just one store's things, but each store has different requirements. That's one thing that we wanted to just make it be just a

simple checkbox and that's how it exists in Vellum is, "Hey, you want this for Amazon? Great. Check." If you decide maybe you're going to start on Amazon and be exclusive, you can do that. If you decide to go wide, just check a couple of boxes and you've got those files.

Otherwise, the answer might depend. You could try uploading a Word file straight to Amazon and sometimes that'll work. It'll sometimes take a few tries to get that right. You can't do that with iBooks.

If you want to do something more sophisticated, it involves understanding formats like ePUB and ePUB 2 and ePUB 3 and which stores take which of those things.

The MOBI proprietary format that Amazon uses. We wanted to just say, "Hey, don't worry about that. Here, check a couple of boxes and you get files." We've tested the outputs so that we know it's going to work fine on Amazon and on all of their different devices that all have different characteristics. It's going to be accepted by iBooks that has really strict requirements as does Google Play.

The answer is, it can be very, very complicated. We want to make it very, very simple.

James: Okay. We're going to talk more about it obviously in just a moment, but let's talk about the Brads then and the business, because first of all, it's coincidental that you are both called Brad and slightly confusing.

Brad W.: It was not planned. Our parents didn't talk about it.

James: Was there no point when you got together in the business and you thought, "I'm going to change my name to Pete"?

Brad W.: We do sometimes have this issue when we have lunch meetings and go out and both order from the same counter and sometimes I will say

that my name is Scott so that Brad Andalman gets the vegan sandwich and I get the non-vegan sandwich.

James: Good call. Good call.

How did you guys get together and where did this idea come from?

Brad A.: We worked together for years at Pixar and we both loved Pixar.

James: Who doesn't love Pixar?

Brad A.: Yeah, exactly, but we decided we wanted to do something different and coincidentally we both ended up leaving on the same day. We had worked together on software at Pixar too and it just went really well. We wanted to do something that we felt ownership over and we wanted to do something smaller and we wanted to do it together so we quit.

I took off on my motorcycle and drove up to Seattle. We established the business and then we started the conversations about what are we going to do. We didn't really quit Pixar knowing what we wanted to do specifically, but we knew that we wanted to do something together that was interesting that involved both creating something professional for people and yet involved our creative sides, which we felt that we had. That was an experience we had at Pixar was both this combination of technical as well as creative that we both really enjoyed.

James: Yeah, Brad W., a great place to be, obviously Pixar, in terms of the aesthetics being an essential part of what you do in terms of Vellum. I'm interested in this idea of where that particular business came from. I understand that you wanted to break free and do something, but some people will spend two years looking at trends and markets and research, but you went into this quite quickly.

Brad W.: Some things just worked out. We talked about a few different things that had nothing to do with books. We're not game developers, so we didn't want to go down that route. We wanted to help people work professionally.

The germ of the idea came from my wife who years ago was reading a lot of the early pioneers of self and indie publishing and just was curious about how that worked. She asked me how it worked and I had no idea. I started talking to Brad about it and it was a thing that just stuck with us as we were going over various ideas. It was like, "You know, there's something interesting here and it's exciting from the outside perspective." Like, "Oh, this is an exciting thing that's happening."

It really felt like we can help bring our skills of software and design and create a solution that could help people. We love books and we love reading. It just felt like a natural fit and that's been good because it's been a few years since those discussions and we're still excited about it. It was a good choice for us.

James: You love books because they're behind you. Brad loves motorbikes, but I'm sure he likes books as well.

Brad A.: You can't really see that wall behind him, but his bookshelf is bigger than mine.

James: You moved up to Seattle? Are you both in that area now?

Brad W.: No, I live in Oakland, which is just a couple of minutes away from Pixar still, but Brad ... Well, you should tell your story.

Brad A.: I'm up in Seattle. I worked at Pixar both down in the Bay area of California for a few years and then moved out to Seattle. There's a small Pixar office here. I work in the Seattle office and we've continued working from our respective locations, working together on this.

James: Let's go back to the product itself.

Can you explain to me how it works from a business point of view? From the users' point of view? There's subscriptions models? There's a one-off fee?

Brad A.: We have a couple different packages, but crucially we wanted to allow authors to download Vellum and play with it, format their book for free initially so that they could understand how it worked, to see if it would work for them.

You can go to our website, download Vellum, format your book, and then only when it comes time to generate ebooks either to upload to online stores or if you'd like to proof them on various devices or apps, then you need to purchase.

Currently, we have three different packages, but really our most popular one is the unlimited, which allows you to create as many ebooks as you want. It's a one-time fee and that's it. You purchase unlimited ebooks. That's the package name and then you're not restricted at all. You can publish all the books that you dream up.

James: That's a slightly unusual approach in a world that's dominated really with getting people to subscriptions, a one-off fee, particularly for this type of model where you are going to go back to it year after year, but obviously that's working for you.

Brad W.: We talked about different business models and there are a lot of attractive things about subscriptions in that you can continue to release updates after updates and you don't have to worry about people being stranded on older versions and buggy versions.

There are some things that we've realized probably wouldn't work for us. In particular, a lot of authors will use Vellum for a couple of weeks and then go

off and spend another several months writing their next book or several years. We felt that authors may not be willing to pay a subscription if several months out of the year they're not even touching it.

We try to think about that in both pricing and design. It's like, "You know what? This is not software that people are using day in, day out. They're writing their books for most of their time and coming into Vellum when they're done so we really want to make it both easy to just like, "Okay, it's been a while since I've used this. Okay I'm going to bring this in and don't have to remember too many switches." That's what we felt made sense for pricing.

We did hear some feedback early on that some authors. We know there's authors out there that are incredibly prolific and will produce books every month, every week, but there are also authors out there that maybe just write one book and that's why we came up with these book packages. If you've just got one book, you can buy this. Right now it's \$30 to just produce that one book. Our experience though has been those are far outnumbered by authors who, because they have a back list or because they just want to produce as many books as they can, they go for the unlimited ebooks option.

That's \$200, but a lot of people we've talked to said, "Well, you know, I would pay a formatter that for just a couple of books." That's feedback we've gotten as for why \$200 might be more expensive than some software, but a lot of authors feel that that's an investment in their business. James: I just scrolled down to the prices and I'm not sure what I was expecting, but that is definitely lower. I thought \$200 is a very good thing for access for life and you mentioned the pay-per-titles. We'll just mention those price points as well. One book at \$29.99. One book at 30 bucks or ten books at 100 bucks or as you say, Vellum Unlimited at \$200. Brad Andalman, let's go to you then on this one. You mentioned about the downside of not being on subscriptions potentially being caught in a previous revision. In fact, the very software I'm using to record this screen

flow recently published an update for which they're charging, which annoys me having paid a reasonable amount for it the first time, like 100 bucks. With Vellum Unlimited, how does that work? Do people get these updates for life or will they face a charge in the future.

Brad A.: To be clear, I understand the decision probably the software engineers made to release a version and want to charge for it, because you work hard on something, you want people to pay for it. But when Brad and I got together and talking about pricing, one of the things we felt strongly was about was if you're purchasing this thing that we're calling unlimited, we want you to feel like you own this.

You're not subscribing monthly or yearly. You've purchased this product. We've been for sale for over three years and all of our updates are free and we've introduced a bunch of different things, everything from the ability to include images, which was a significant addition. All of our updates have been free.

In the future, our intention is that people who have purchased this unlimited ebooks package will be able to publish unlimited ebooks in every future version of Vellum.

James: That's great and it's what we do with the course, as well, I should say with SPF. The one-off charge and then you get the updates as long as they keep coming out, as long as we're still alive.

Then just to remind people of something you said earlier, which I think is another great advantage of Vellum is the fact that you can download it for free and use it for free.

There's no if I invest \$200 bucks in this, Brad W., what's it going to look like? You get to see that, right?

Brad W.: Yes, and there's no time limit on that either. I think that's been important for authors to understand, "Okay, what is this going to look like?"

That's one of the key things that we wanted to solve, this mystery of what is this going to look like.

That's why we have this preview right in Vellum. I think that's helpful for any user to see, oh, okay that's what it's going to look like. When it's on a device and then it also gives users who are just getting their feet wet, it's a way to understand, "Okay, this is what I'm going to get should I decide to make this purchase."

We really wanted to be able to let users answer that question without any risk. Some users who early on said, "Oh, you know what? This looks incredible, but I have a lot of illustrations in my book," in our very, very, very first release, we said, "Oh, I'm glad you found that out. You didn't put money to discover that and hey, we hear you. That's important. We'll get to it." When we did add that update, then they were able to come back and say, "Okay, this works great for me." Then they were able to purchase.

James: Let me ask you then, Brad Andalman, how's it going?
How's the business going?

Brad A.: It's going well, actually. You do something and you do the research on whether ebooks are the future or they're not, but you never really know, I think.

We just had this idea that there are a lot of people out there who want to self publish and we're actually really happy that our business just keeps growing. There seem to be more and more authors who are discovering us every day and downloading and using Vellum happily so that's actually been really great for us to see, because it could've been just like, "Oh, we released this thing and yeah, there's no real need for it."

We knew when we got into it that we were surprised by how difficult it was to manage all of these different requirements from all of these different stores, but even we didn't understand the extent, I think, when we first

started doing this. It's great that we were able to get in there, simplify it, and then produce something that people still seem to be enjoying.

James: Brad W., there is a lot to think about when you self publish and I'm going through that now and it can be a complicated world. As we say, formatting is just one of those areas. Another thing when you think about aesthetics, the very obvious one is to think about book design, book cover.

Are there any verticals for you in the future, do you think? Or are you going to focus on this niche?

Brad W.: This is where we're focusing. Cover is an interesting question and some people have asked about that. I think that's the kind of thing that is still really handled best by a cover designer.

You really want that to have that personal touch. It's amazing that there's just a lot of great designers out there and pretty much any price point. We think that's still something that's best handled by designers and we're focusing on the interior still.

James: That's great. The aesthetics, which I mentioned, there's no surprise to me that there's some pedigree here from Pixar, one of the most beautiful animation studios on the planet and you focus on Mac as well which is a company that produces technology, but does it in a very beautiful way. Clearly, that's an important part of it for you.

In terms of what's on offer for people inside the options for you, Brad Andalman ... Mine's a military thriller. Other people will be in different genres.

There's choice there for us to make sure that the way people view our books somehow reflects their content?

Brad A.: Vellum currently ships with eight different book styles and we've tried to have those eight overarching book styles represent a lot of different genres, like you said.

We have the more technological thriller perhaps one. We definitely have a more romantic one. We have a few modern ones. We have a few old school ones. We have eight of those large groupings.

We call them book styles and then within each book style, you can choose from sub styles so within, say, our Kindred book style, which is maybe targeted more at romance perhaps, you can choose from four or five headings. You can change your first paragraph style so that you can choose, oh, I want a script drop cap or a serif drop cap or no drop cap at all.

You can go through and make all of those choices for the different kinds of things you have in your books from ornamental breaks to the way that images are displayed. Within each of those eight book style groupings, you can go in and further customize the interior of your book.

Brad W.: We've seen some authors will just flip through the eight styles, pick one, say, "That's great. I love everything about it," and they're done. We've seen some authors go in and really pick and choose from those options. It's been interesting because you see maybe we designed one of these styles ... This is a more technical style, but some authors will just mix and match things and suddenly it's like, "Oh, wow, that actually looks much different than we had in mind and yet it works."

Some of the styles are actually a bit more flexible and you infer the overall style if you have a regency cover and you see a more generic style inside, the whole thing reads as regency. We've been surprised. We started with some options that at our initial intent, they've really gone beyond that.

James: Brad Andelman, in terms of developments in the future then, obviously, illustrations was a big one. On some of the ereading devices that you have, they're still quite a challenge, I have to say.

I'm reading a couple books at the moment that have some diagrams that come up and I'm there at night trying to get them bigger and squint at them, but that clearly is only going to get stronger as time goes on.

Brad A.: We have a bunch of things, like improvements we want to make to existing features and a whole slew of requests we've got from authors as well who want certain things. We get a request for more styles a lot of times. We get a request for print books as well, which is interesting. We also have a lot of things where we could improve existing features. There's definitely no shortage of things to work on.

James: In terms of helping people navigate their way through their first format experience, what supports on offer do you have? Tutorials, etc?

Brad W.: We have a pretty short tutorial that gives you the lay of the land. When you first start Vellum, you'll be prompted to use that tutorial if you want to.

What I think a lot of authors like is we'll give you a sample manuscript so you don't have to worry about is your manuscript in the right form. You can just use this sample manuscript. It's the Invisible Man by H.G. Wells. You just drag it in and just play around. I think that really helps authors see what they can do and not have to worry about their own book.

Then when they're ready to bring in their manuscript, they can think about it differently, but most of our users who go through that tutorial do get a sense of how the app works. This is the support team here too so when people do have questions that aren't answered by that tutorial or any other questions, we do try to give our best answers. We're the email support team. We answer as directly as we can and as quickly as we can. You're

right. There are just a million questions out there for formatting and uploading.

James: I should also point out in our 101 Facebook group, Vellum has come up and people have discussed ideas and have helped each other which is obviously a great way to learn how to use new software and you've already got existing people who are experience users.

Brad W.: Yeah, for sure.

James: In fact, that's also brings me onto always a plus point for me when I see the example books rolling past and I see a couple of names from the Self Publishing Formula community so Lee Strauss and others are obviously keen users of Vellum and that's a good recommendation from some of our successful authors.

That's great. Thank you very much. If you Google Vellum, you do get quite a lot of information on the old type of paper material but they printed books on or wrapped books in. People should know that it's [Vellum.pub](https://vellum.pub), isn't it? To get to you.

Brad W.: Yes, that's right.

Brad A.: Yes.

James: Vellum.pub. Thank you, Brad and Brad, so much for joining us. We saw your cat, Brad Andalman, briefly.

Brad A.: Yeah.

James: Run through the shot. I was really hoping that he or she would sit on the motorbike.

Brad A.: She was posed attractively before we started this, but I think she got a little bit scared by all the talking.

James: Look, it's been great to talk to you. Thank you so much indeed for joining us.

Brad A.: Thank you so much.

Brad W.: Thank you.

James: So lovely to talk to them in Seattle and the Bay area, Oakland I think it was, in San Francisco. Two great guys who just, like a lot of people in this space, they saw a niche and they didn't think, "Will this work?" They made it work and they've created a little space of their own.

I would urge you to go and have a look at Vellum, have a look at them online. You'll see very, very beautiful looking bit of software and nice aesthetic as I mentioned in the interview, we saw Lee Strauss's book going up in their showoff area. Got a few other SPF names who are familiar to us on SPF in our courses and our Facebook groups. That's always a good sign, I think, because we have a high ... We have good taste.

Mark: Exquisite taste. Yeah, we have a very high bar to entry.

James: Yeah. There you go. That's Vellum for you. If you're interested in the nuts and bolts of how all this works, we'll talk a little bit more about what's going to be in the 101 course as we get towards the autumn and the launch for that, but Vellum and formatting, of course, will be a part of that. Not just Vellum, but formatting in general will be a part of that.

Now I've got to go and do some spell checking and work out how many sentences in my novel don't have the required number of words.

Mark: Yeah, it's always helpful to have sentences that scan properly, as a pro tip.

One thing before we sign off, James. We need to mention that we're still running the competition. The contest where you can spend money on a formatter if you wanted to. You could find them through Reedsy as well as a cover, editorial work. Anything you need. Everything you need, really, to get your book into tip top shape.

That runs until the end of October and you can enter at SelfPublishingFormula.com/Reedsy. R-E-E-D-S-Y. It's a viral competition which means that if you share it, your entry, you'll get additional entries if people then enter on your link. It's all explained at that page. We've had a good number of entries. Some people sharing quite a lot and getting quite a lot of entries. It's a \$3,000 first prize and we've got three prizes of \$600 to be spent on book covers as the runners-up prizes so get on over there and check that out before the end of the month.

James: Yeah, that is really stellar prize. 3,000 bucks will buy you a lot of professional services to turn your draft manuscript into a sparkling book.

Mark: I'm glad you finished that sentence.

James: Into a sparkling book that's been through very good professional editorial services.

Just one thing to clarify on this. We've had a couple of emails. When you share it, the sharing itself does not give you an extra entry into the competition, but when people then subsequently go into the competition via your link, by what you shared, that's when you get the extra entries. Because people have been sharing it and then immediately checking to see how many entries they've got and contacting us.

You share it. You stick it everywhere in your social media feeds and then when people click on it, you get extra entries. I think it's five? Is it four or five, I think for each click.

Mark: Yeah, something like that.

James: It is explained in the rules there. Yeah, you got a couple weeks left of that so get your chances in. I'd like that 3,000. It's going to be expensive for me now, this bit.

Mark: Yeah, you can't win. You're precluded.

James: I can't win. That sounds like me in life, but I'll win when my book wins the Booker. That'll be a win.

Mark: That'll show me.

James: You're safe. There's no chance. Okay, excellent. Thank you very much, indeed, Mark. Looking forward to speaking next week and thanks to the Brads from Vellum. We will be with you next Friday.

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