

## **PODCAST 36: INDIE AUTHOR POWER TEAMS WITH CHARLOTTE BYRD, NATASHA BOYD & PARTNERS**

**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 designers, publicists, professional marketers, and even ghostwriters. One winner will get \$3,000 to spend on any professional service found on Reedsy. There are also three runners-up prizes of a free book cover design voucher worth \$600. To enter, simply visit [selfpublishingformula.com/reedsy](http://selfpublishingformula.com/reedsy). That's R-double E-D-S-Y. You'll have a chance to spread the word about the contest as well, and each person who enters using your links increases your own chances of winning. Good luck.

Hello and welcome to podcast #36 from the Self Publishing Formula.

Announcer: Two writers, one just starting out, the other a bestseller. 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: Mark, you're almost in your brand new office, your man cave that you've created for yourself in Salisbury, but not quite yet?

Mark: Not quite yet. I'm actually at home right now, because I'm waiting for a delivery from the States for a funky new camera that will allow me to do Facebook live streaming even more effectively than taking out my phone and using that. They tried to deliver it once. It wasn't accepted, so now I'm waiting again. It's one of those, "We'll be with you between 7:00 and 7:00." Something like that.

James: "We'll be with you between the 1st and the 30th of the month."

Mark: Yeah, hopeless.

James: Well, I'm interested to see this camera. It is something that we talk about in terms of author/reader engagement.

You really started your Facebook live with your readers, didn't you? You've been using them with SPF quite a lot now.

Something you'd recommend as a way of keeping your readers engaged?

Mark: Yeah, definitely. It's great. It's a cheap reach. You don't need to pay. It's all free. You don't need to spend to boost it or turn it into an ad. You get really high organic reach. I do it quite a lot. I'm going to try with this new camera, if I have a little studio set up in the new office. I'll be able to hop on and do regular Q & A's and things like that, for both my readers and for SPF listeners as well.

James: I think we're all up for some hardware recommendations and solutions to stuff, so you'll have to talk to us about it in the future. We'll obviously see the results, and see if this is something that I might even play with.

Mark: Yeah, you like your gadgets. I think it'll be right up your street.

James: Good. Okay, here's a question for you, Mark.

Do you do all your business stuff yourself? Does your wife help you at all? Do you have anybody else helping you?

Mark: Mostly me, to be honest. The writing side of things, I've got a VA. She helps me with some, quite small bits and pieces. Then, on the other side of things, what we do ... It's obviously a little bit different. For the actual writing side of things, I do it myself. Though, I can see the benefits of having help when needed.

James: How about Mrs. Dawson? It's a bit of an old-fashioned model, isn't it? I think I allude to this in a minute in our interviews, but the reason I'm asking these questions is ... The almost Victorian/Edwardian level here, in that you start a business and it's your family, you know. Dawson & Son, or Mr. & Mrs. Dawson running the shop, and so on.

The reason we're talking about this is because there seems to be quite an increasing number of authors who have just got to that breakthrough point of making money, making a decent salary, enough for them and their other half to live on, that they have suddenly employed their other half. We've got two interviews in a row here.

Mark: Yeah, I can give you a couple more actually. Joanna Penn has retired her husband, to work on her business; and Adam Croft has retired his wife. There are few people who get in that fortunate position now. I think as you say, it does allow people to bring in very helpful, valuable assistance without needing to, effectively to bring them on payroll. They're kind of already on the payroll. If it can be done, it's a great idea.

James: These two interviews that we've put together ... They are Charlotte Byrd, who's referred to as Kate - because that's her real name - a few times in the interview. Charlotte's her author name, who we caught up with in California a few weeks ago. Before that, Natasha Boyd. Natasha actually lives in Atlanta, but she came down to Florida to see us.

We've put these interviews together for two reasons. One is that they both employ their other half, their husbands, to do the work. Natasha's husband is still in a full-time job, but it's sort of related field. Although, there's no doubt in the future that might be ... I don't think his employers would like to hear this, so I mustn't speak on his behalf. He certainly didn't say anything to me. Get myself out of trouble here. But you can imagine in the future if Natasha's income doubles or triples from where it is now, they may revisit that.

Charlotte's husband has quit his job, and is now her marketing person. He is also writing his own book.

The other reason I put these two interviews together is for someone like me, who's starting off and has financial ambitions in their mind of where they want to be in a couple of years. These two authors have both, in the last 12 - 18 months cracked it.

They've gone from a few hundreds a month, not even that sometimes, to regular 5 figures or nearly 5 figures. In their cases, to turn in a salary that means they are living off their writing, and actually accumulating some wealth through it as well. That real breakthrough. They're both at the beginning of that, which is absolutely fantastic. I thought it was really worth hearing these two interviews together. We're going to hear from Charlotte in a moment, but first Natasha.

Natasha: My name's Natasha Boyd, and I write contemporary romance mainly. I'm obviously from the UK originally, but I live in Atlanta now with my husband. I started in 2013. I was friends with some authors online, and so when I was getting ready to publish, just decided to immediately self-publish. I was contacted by an agent very soon after, about two weeks later; and was convinced that we should try and sell it traditionally, which I wasn't quite sure about.

James: What was your thinking about self-publishing at that point? A lot of people, when they start out, they don't know a lot about self-publishing. They still look at it as being a fall back if they don't get a deal. You thought about self-publishing from the beginning.

Natasha: Yes, right away. I had some friends who were already self-publishing. I was in a lot of author forums, and there was a lot of talk amongst people in my genre about leaving the traditional field. They were losing control of a lot of aspects that they could see other people gaining control of: cover, and prices, and all those kinds of things.

When it came time to do it, I had a professional cover designer that I knew. I knew a professional editor. I was like, "Why don't I just do it myself? Why wouldn't it be better to put my book up in the court of public opinion, as opposed to throwing it at gatekeepers and that kind of thing?" I'd already entered some contests, and I'd finished in one. I felt confident that that was the thing that would suit me best.

My agent decided that it really would be a great thing for a traditional publishing deal. The answer came back from one of the large big five, that they didn't think they could break my book out any more than it had been. At that point, I'd sold 25,000 copies; but I went on to sell almost 100,000 copies.

James: It just demonstrates right there how that gatekeeper system is broken.

Natasha: Yes, absolutely. My agent was fantastic actually. She said, "Look, let's just sell foreign rights." That's what she focused on, and we ended up actually in an auction in Germany that went to six figures. I feel very confident that I made the right choice for me, and that I've somehow managed to really straddle very well the indie publishing side in this country and then the foreign rights.

I would say the only massive mistake, I still think that I probably made was we did end up selling English rights in the UK and Commonwealth. My thought process there was to maybe have more print books. I've had readers email me with a picture from the book in the airport book shop in Kuala Lumpur and those sort of places, and I'm like, "Oh, I'm really penetrating the world market."

But I don't see evidence of those sales from a traditional publishing house. Also when it comes time to doing any kind of marketing, you're basically trying to market the same product two different ways without any control in the other countries, and it became a disaster. I could say to anybody, keep

your English rights. Just focus on selling foreign rights where necessary, Germany being one of the best countries to start.

James: I think Mark does a very similar thing, in terms of foreign rights, go through a trad kind of deal, but yeah, English rights he keeps. I want to take you back a little bit, the agent bit. I'm thinking, from my point of view, and other points of view of other people listening to this.

How do you get an agent suddenly, right at the beginning of your career? How did that happen?

Natasha: I was really lucky actually. I was actually contacted by two agents about two weeks after I published, because the book was doing quite well. I ended up signing with one of them. She was very convincing and very enthusiastic about my work. It was clear she had actually read the book from start to finish, and the other agent who contacted me had sort of dabbled in reading it.

James: Did you have a quiz ready for them?

Natasha: No.

James: On page 97 ... What does Arthur say to Sean?

Natasha: It took me so by surprise, and I felt very gratified and validated, I guess. You can't help, in this publishing world, still come up against the people who don't understand why somebody would self-publish and not traditionally publish. To have things like an agent and those ... It's really vanity, is all I can say, in some respects. Except that when they do things like sell foreign rights and really work like a partner and team with you. Then it works really well.

James: Okay. Tell me a little bit about the writing though.

2013, was that literally your first book?

Natasha: Yes, that was literally my first book.

James: Why did you start?

Natasha: I always wanted to write. I think everybody says that, or actually, probably 90% of people say that.

We had moved, and I didn't know anyone in the new place we were living. It was a very inspirational place. It was by the coast. I just sat down and started writing. Then I actually met two authors who live on the island where we were. There's a big writer's group that's there.

James: Which island is this?

Natasha: Hilton Head Island, so near Savannah. Really, they were all very encouraging. I thought, "Gosh, if I'm going to go for it, I'm going to go for it." That's how that started.

James: Okay, so there was this seed there before, but you were in the right place at the right time. You wrote your book.

How did you write your book? Draft it, redraft it? Write it the first time? Did you plan it? Are you a pantsier, as they call it?

Natasha: I am a pantsier, but I went through so many revisions, it's unbelievable. I think I sat on it for six months rewriting, giving it to critique partners, giving it to an editor, agonizing. I think I said to my husband at one point, "Look, when this goes live, if a hundred people buy it, we're going out for dinner." Which I thought would take forever.

James: How many sales later is that now?

Natasha: We've just crossed 100,000 sales for that book.

James: Congratulations.

Natasha: This is the deal. I really feel like there are a lot of writers who are extremely prolific, and I'm very envious of that. I've sort of agonized myself. If I could write a little faster, I could do more.

What I've really come to understand is everyone writes at their own pace, and you've got to do what works for you. What is important to me is making a living from my writing.

Some of the people you've had on your podcast, actually, who've sold millions. It's really inspiring, but it does sometimes feel a little bit out of reach for the average writer. But it is really possible to do very well and have a career without getting to that point. Not saying that I don't want to get to that point.

James: You sold 100,000. You say a career.

You can give us the figures if you want, or you don't have to; but what sort of work level salary are we talking about here?

Natasha: Well, I'm fine being honest. I mean, the tax guy knows what I make. I'm severely disorganized, so I just did our taxes for 2015. For the second year in a row, I've just cleared six figures.

James: That's a decent salary.

Natasha: Yes, yes. It's not millions, and it's not six figures per month, like some people. There's highs and lows. You have amazing months and you have low months. Certainly, when you're doing foreign rights, you have the signing advance that comes in. Then you get the royalties at six month intervals. Yes, it's up and down, but if you can look at it over the long haul, it's extremely doable; very accessible to the average writer.

James: Well, I think from my point of view, and from a lot of people who are starting out, this is a more inspirational interview actually than listening to somebody who, as you say, makes millions; because you've gone through the steps. It's been, I'm sure, a hard task. We'll talk about that in a moment, but here you are, a couple of years later and you've got \$100,000 income from it.

Natasha: Right, exactly.

James: As long as you pay your taxes.

Natasha: Yes, that's before tax.

James: Schools don't pay for themselves right. Okay.

Natasha: Yeah.

James: Stephen is patiently standing next to you. Your husband, who's taking over the marketing, as we go forward. Let me talk to you then about the marketing. Obviously, you had your book, you thought about trad, but you came back and decided you were going to stick with self-publishing. Then you sit there with a blank bit of paper in front of you, thinking how do I sell the book.

How did you start that?

Natasha: I was lucky in that I had some PR background. I realized that if people don't talk about your book, you're not going to sell any. My first point of entry for marketing was to try and get the book in front of influencers. Whatever those are for a particular person.

If you're writing a traditional book, I would say your local community influencers. For me, being in romance, it was online book bloggers. It really was a numbers game. They didn't know me from a hole in the wall. I just

sent a lot of emails, made sure that they were personalized. I did a lot of research on what their real names were, cross referencing across social media and Twitter accounts.

James: Normal kind of stalking behavior.

Natasha: Yes, exactly, exactly, without the crazy eyes. It really did pay off, but it's work. This whole business that we're in. It was very clear, very early on, that writing the book was a very small part of it. I will say that as the market has changed, and certainly in romance, become more saturated; we've had to work a lot harder and spin our wheels a lot faster. Mark actually came into my life at a great time.

I had just published my third full-length book, and had lots of excitement from readers on my mailing list. Then the sales didn't reflect that. They were still fantastic and on a par with my first one, but it felt like you should grow your readership with each subsequent book.

I would have people email me a month later saying, "Oh, did you ever release your book?" I was realizing that I wasn't reaching these people. They couldn't see it. If they weren't on my mailing list, they were gone. The first book wasn't working, I wasn't reaching them; and Mark Dawson floated through my News Feed.

James: You were organically using social media at that point?

Natasha: Exactly.

James: Which, obviously as we now know, is quite limited. They've kind of tweaked the algorithms so that it's limited, and you have to pay.

Natasha: Exactly, and this was early days, and it was becoming very clear, very early on, that you needed to target and focus.

James: Mark turned up, dressed in white on a horse ...

Natasha: Galloping across my timeline.

James: You got into Facebook advertising, I'm guessing?

Natasha: I did, I did. I dabbled, and what I realized very quickly was there was a lot of information to learn; and I have a very, very short attention span. I quickly tried to persuade Stephen, since he's in marketing. I was like, "Please do this course for me, and I will somehow, by osmosis, take it out of your head."

In the end, he's now become more proficient at it than I have. Not everybody, obviously, has that partner, but I would say the information is unbelievable. I mean, just the dabbling that I did with some of the early modules and getting started, which was fantastic. Right away you can get started. It really made a huge difference.

James: You started with Facebook advertising, but you were selling okay before then. Just organically, at that point?

Natasha: Yes, just organically, but with a lot of just online relationships.

James: You were working hard, and with your PR background, etc.

Natasha: That takes away from writing time, a lot.

James: That is time intensive. Then you started Facebook advertising. Did that make an immediate impact or take a while to get going?

Natasha: It did take a while. Where it really made an impact, was when I switched to what Mark was suggesting, to start building the mailing list that way first. That's when I saw the huge difference. Right now, we're at the

stage of we're boxing up a couple of my books. Our next big project is to market the box set on Facebook advertising.

James: What's your mailing list at?

Natasha: Right now, it's grown from 3 1/2 thousand, so not that many compared to some people; but for me, fantastic. It's grown to about 58, almost 6,000 thousand since March, since I've started doing all the various things.

I'll tell you what's really helped, is that I gave away the first book for free from a mailing list, before I went permafrees, which I've only just done recently. What I also did, is I offer - immediately after people get that- they get an email from me, telling them how valuable the book is. What I mean by that is, "Before you take your free book and run, it's won an award, it's sold 100,000 copies, it's my highest selling book; but I'm giving it to you for free, because I'm taking a chance that you're going to love it. You're taking a chance on me; I'm taking a chance on you."

James: You spell this out?

Natasha: I spell this out.

James: That's great.

Natasha: I say ...

James: Here's the deal, basically.

Natasha: Yeah, here's the deal. My second book is not free, but I know you're going to love book one, and I've got kids to feed.

James: It's at 400 bucks.

Natasha: It's \$4. What you can do, is if you love it, I will give you the third one for free. When they get to the end of book two ... This way I feel like ... As long as they didn't come in from the free book on the mailing list, then they can at least join the mailing list at book three. Then after book four, is my 6th. I've got a 6th chapter bonus from an alternate point of view, including the sexy scene, which is another avenue into the newsletter. I feel I've got three points of entry at this point. If people don't join and get the first book. If they just happen to buy it, and not come in on the mailing list to get it free; then there's other ways they can join.

James: Did you come up with this?

Natasha: Yeah.

James: Flow?

Natasha: Yes, and it's working great!

James: Stephen, standing there patiently. I have to raise myself up, 6'4" or something are you.

You've got a marketing background, I think?

Stephen: Marketing/advertising. My day job is actually with a marketing agency.

James: You've looked at Mark's course and so on, and also presumably the wider work load.

Stephen: Yeah.

James: How is this going to work? Are you going to be taking this over?

Stephen: I'm going to take over. I think what Natasha mentioned before, is that a lot of this stuff around launching books and the constant publicity around it takes away from her writing time.

I'm just starting out in this, over the last month and a half or so; so whatever I can do to get things off her plate that don't affect the storyline of the book. That is not my area of expertise at all. Anything from a marketing standpoint, finance, operations, the email list, that sort of stuff. Anything that I can take off her plate, and also leverage some of my background and knowledge as well.

James: That's going to be quite tough for you, because you've got a full-time job.

Stephen: Yeah, but I think helps a lot. I did take the Facebook course. It took a while for Natasha to convince me to do it, but once I started it, I really got into it.

I think it only took me probably about a week or so to get through the entire course. Once you get into it and start to understand - Mark even mentions this in the course - once you get into it, it doesn't take a whole lot of time.

It takes a while the first couple of weeks to figure out the audiences and things like that; but once you understand it, it's just going in there and checking on your numbers and maybe tweaking a few things.

Then spending a few hours on a weekend, or one night, when we come up with a new campaign; like for the boxed set. Okay, who are we going to target and that sort of stuff. Then, you're just kind of looking at it. We've definitely tested different audiences; see what works, see what doesn't work. It's not that much of a time crunch at this point, but again, all I've been doing is the Facebook ads. I haven't really been doing much with the mailing list and stuff like that.

James: Some people would think with your professional marketing background, and that's going to give you a head start in understanding this type of material. Not just Mark's course, there's other people teaching in this area, and other social media platforms.

How easy do you think it is for ordinary people, people who don't have a background in marketing, to get a hold of this type of methodology, and make it work?

Stephen: I think it's easy. I have the background from a strategic standpoint, but what I've told people at this conference is, I am not the target audience for Natasha's book. I mean, I don't read a whole lot of romantic fiction or anything like that.

James: You're dead behind the eyes. Dead inside.

Stephen: Yes.

James: You're a bloke.

Stephen: That's probably more likely. Honestly, I do think it's really, really easy. I think as long as you go into it, and don't get overwhelmed. It is a lot of information, the first few modules that you go through, but he does a great job slowing it down for you.

I'm going to go back and probably do it again. Look at some of the modules to figure out some things that maybe I haven't gotten right yet. In my viewpoint, it's a marathon, not a sprint. We're going to do things wrong. You're going to have to go back and do them over and over again, but it's well worth it.

James: That's a great approach for any marketing. We have an alternate business and video production, and it's PR and marketing. We always say to

people you've got to play the long game and not expect some fireworks on day one. That's a good attitude.

In terms of your ambition then, the two of you, you talk about it would be nice to have this bit bigger salary; but we were talking to somebody this morning who's a couple of books ahead of you, and she's now doing a quarter of a million dollars a year. For me, it feels like you have a platform to build on.

Is that something you're aiming for?

Natasha: Absolutely. I think you should never be comfortable with your status quo. You should always be trying to improve your craft, your methodology, and all of those things. Hopefully, the rewards come with that hard work.

I do think that this is a career and it is a business. This is not really just a job. As far as that goes, when you start writing more books, there's a lot of extra things that come along with that business. You need somebody, actually, that you can call right away and get a cover done and some marketing materials pulled together. You do find yourself with employees. With that in mind, you do need to earn more money if you're going to do this properly and keep writing, I think. Absolutely.

I don't think anybody looks at any of the people here who are doing fantastically well and thinks, "Oh, well they're just lucky." It's hard work, and it should be hard work. I think it's very gratifying; very gratifying and satisfying. Also, you should never get comfortable where you are. You should just always try to keep improving.

Stephen: One other thing that I would mention too, is getting stuff off the author's plate, like what we're trying to do, just allows her to just focus on writing. Getting more work coming out the door. Hopefully, that just speeds up the revenue process quite a bit as well.

Natasha: Right, yeah. I think at the end of the day, yes, you want to make more money; but you've also got to keep your readers happy. Try not to be so focused on producing the revenue as much as ... That's the by-product of keeping your readers happy and getting more readers.

James: Are you getting a lot of feedback from your readers? When you say your bonus thing had perhaps a slightly more sexy edge than your mainstream stuff.

Natasha: It was just from a different point-of-view. People love it. I've got great readers who email me and keep in touch. One of them even sent me an entire series outline of who she wants to see in the next books and who they should marry. I suggested to her, "Well, that's great, but maybe you should write in my world, and we'll do some fan fiction." That's really like a big endgame. Yeah, it's been really satisfying. The readers are fantastic, and I think that's what you've got to keep in mind, more than anything.

James: Chance of some point quitting the day job, do you think, Stephen? I don't know if your boss is listening to this.

Stephen: It depends on if my boss is listening.

James: Let's assume they're not.

Stephen: Let's assume they're not. Yeah, that's the end goal, and I think it is something that is absolutely attainable.

James: You've got a lifestyle then, which is worth more than money, isn't it?

Natasha: Absolutely. Time and freedom and all those things. You can work from anywhere, really. I mean, here you are, in Florida.

James: We work from anywhere. We've been working in a Chevy Traverse for the last 1,500 miles. Great. Natasha, thank you, and Stephen, for talking

to us. Natasha, you've done brilliantly in keeping your English accent, taking on by osmosis, American verve and entrepreneurial spirit.

Natasha: Oh, there you go, can do attitude. Yeah.

James: A great combination. Can do attitude, exactly.

Charlotte: My name is Charlotte Byrd, and I'm a self-published author. I write mainly billionaire romances. My most famous books are "Malibu Connection: The Date", and "The Date."

James: Okay, Charlotte, let's talk about your author career over the last, shall we say, 12 months, I think, probably has been the big change in your life.

Charlotte: The big change.

James: You were trundling along. When did you start writing and start trying to become an author?

Charlotte: I've always wanted to be a writer. It's just been a passion of mine ever since I was little. I actually wanted to major in English in school, but ended up going with math instead.

James: Because that's a natural alternative to English, right?

Charlotte: Yes, my parents were insisting that I would have a job after graduation. It's been a passion of mine for a long time. I used to write a lot of short stories, and then I stumbled onto romance writing and found out that people were quite successful in the genre. I decided to give it a go. I thought I could just put a book together, and put it out there, and it would sell. That was very disappointing, because I did not have any sales, hardly any sales.

James: It's strange that, isn't it. You write a book, and people don't automatically come buy it in the thousands.

Charlotte: Yes, and apparently it's not 2011, whenever that was happening for romance authors. I enrolled in Mark's class, and it's been a whirlwind ever since. All the readers that I've gained, and all the money that's been coming in from my books.

James: You've been a stellar student from Mark's class, which is the reason that we're here in California, in the desert in California. Yesterday, we were sweating it in 90 degree, 90% humidity in Florida; and today, we're in this dry, beautiful landscape. Almost a moonscape.

Charlotte: Joshua Tree, California welcomes you.

James: Yeah. Well, we're delighted to be here, and we wanted to talk to you about that. Obviously, you had the material. There was no problem with the books.

You were waiting to find that magic key to finding your audience.

Charlotte: Yes. When I focused on writing romance, I wrote my first book, and I put it out there. I didn't know what to do with it, and I stumbled upon Mark's course. During that, as I started making sales from the books, I continued to write. I ended up writing like six books in six months, and found my audience. Readers are just delighted. They're always writing me every day, telling me how much they love my books. It's just been amazing.  
James: Billionaire romance.

Charlotte: Yes. Kind of "50 Shades" inspired; but no BDSM, just erotic. That's been my bread and butter, so to speak.

James: This choice of yours was commercially driven, this choice of genre?

Charlotte: Yes, it was. I've actually really enjoyed writing it. I'd never read romance until last summer, really. I wasn't this die-hard fan, like a lot of people are. I stumbled upon it, started reading it; I thought I could definitely write it. I've been really enjoying it.

What makes it different from other books is that it's really focused on the two characters. You just develop their emotional sides. That's been the most interesting aspect for me.

James: How did you find the transition from writer to writer/marketer, which is really what you are now?

Charlotte: Well, through Mark's course, that's been the main transition. I actually did not realize how much work the marketing aspects of all of this involve, how much work that involves. That's why, actually, my husband recently quit his job and joined the business with me. He's helping me out a lot with the Facebook ads and all the business aspect of running a romance business.

James: We've got Kevin, husband, here.

Charlotte: Yes.

James: I guess you write from reality. You've got a billionaire husband, and you live this romantic life.

Charlotte: Yes, that's why we live here in a one-bedroom, in the desert.

James: The way you're selling books, I don't think you're going to be here for much longer.

Kevin, you had a steady job in one of the big global industries, a pharmaceutical, yeah?

Kevin: Yes. It was a good job because it allowed us to finance a fairly rapid expansion for this business.

James: That's something just to dwell on for a second, because a lot of people don't realize ... When things take off in social media advertising, you really want to funnel money in. We've had this conversation before. Adam Croft, I think he had 50,000 pounds he basically just borrowed from credit cards and family.

Charlotte: When they're doing well, you want to keep putting money into it, because there are months that are slower or the cost per click is much more expensive.

May was really great for us, and then in the summer it's been slower. When it hits, like I think for Christmas, you've got to save up for that.

James: It promises good money. It makes you sound like drug dealers, but a commercial, global company pharmaceutical.

Kevin: Yeah, legalized drug dealing.

James: You've gone one step further than just providing the capital now.

Kevin: Yeah, now that we've been able to build up the savings, and the business is generating a consistent revenue; now the main need is time and labor. We don't need the capital anymore, but it's just become so much work that it was hard for Kate to keep up, to produce content and to manage the advertising.

Charlotte: Well, it's hard to write, to actually spend the time writing when you have to do so much other marketing stuff that's involved in running the business.

Kevin: The creative work can be very draining.

Charlotte: Yes.

Kevin: It's emotionally and psychologically, it takes a lot out of you. Then, if you have to go and track the performance of all of your ads and do your budgeting and all of that, it gets to be too much.

It's been very rewarding for me to see the business grow, obviously, but now to be able to contribute to its success by putting in the effort and see Kate not so overburdened with all that work.

James: You snuck out her real name there.

Kevin: I did.

James: Kate.

Charlotte: Oh!

Kevin: I'm so sorry. Honestly ...

Charlotte: I'm outed. That's okay.

James: There's more than one Kate, I think, in the US. It doesn't matter. People know. Most of the people at the office, that we speak to, have two names.

Charlotte: It's hard when you start out, you know. When I first started out, I wasn't sure that it was ... You write erotic things, and you're like, "Oh, what's going to happen?"

Kevin: Do you want your family reading it?

Charlotte: Do you want your family to read? I was also doing my regular business of writing resumes and cover letters, under my real name. I didn't

want to have all of that together. Then, it kind of blows up, and you're like just Charlotte. It was a good name, yeah.

James: I think I saw you, I didn't read the post, I just had a quick flip through on Facebook groups this morning.

I think somebody asked the question, "Should I have an alternate author name?" I think someone posted on that.

Charlotte: I have answered that question a lot. It's more of a question I think with romance, just because some people have very religious family members or people who don't understand or they're embarrassed.

Kevin: We've met other romance authors who live in ... There's that one woman who lives in like Oklahoma, in a small town, and she's very successful and read by a lot of people. But in her real-life community ...

Charlotte: Yeah, she was married to a farmer and it was kind of like "50 Shades" kind of stuff, and she just said, "I could never tell ... My husband knows, but no one else knows." Her children didn't know, no one. It was really just about keeping her private life and public life separate.

Kevin: It can also be an advantage in terms of your branding. If you have a nom de plume, you can have your whole social media life focused on establishing and promoting this brand of the author. Not have it diluted by your personal identity.

Charlotte: By your high school friends.

Kevin: Yes.

James: And your own behavior online, which you know all of us would probably like to separate out from our work lives.

Joining back on the husband/wife routine here. I suppose there's a couple of aspects to this. One is that, first of all, you are both going to be now living the dream. We talk about this a lot. It doesn't take a lot of money to change your life from the drudgery of the 9 to 5, to sitting in a beautiful part of the world in your own time, going for walks and making your money doing that. That's the first thing. You're making really good money, but you could do it for less; but that's such a great thing to choose. Well done on that.

I guess you must be delighted with that, Kevin.

Kevin: Absolutely. Especially with my job, I was out of town 3 to 4 days a week, travelling constantly. To be able to be at home and spend time with my wife and just be at home, that's really such a big win for this whole process.

Charlotte: When I first started, my goal was not even to make this much money. I mean, that would have been great, but it was really hard to even imagine. When I saw that Mark was spending that much on Facebook ads, I was like, "Oh my God, that's crazy!" My goal was to make like \$2,500 or \$3,000 a month; just so I didn't have to do this other job. I could just write, and that's it. It's been really great, but yeah, you definitely don't need that much money. There are lots of people who are living their great lives on much less, just pursuing their passions.

James: Well, you need to raise the equivalent of your salary. Actually, I think you need to raise a bit less. We made the move into our own business. When you work, you actually spend quite a lot of money working. Travelling around and buying lunch, so you can live on less money. You say you were out of town a couple of days a week and now you're back, which brings me on to the other question about working together as husband and wife.

Does he get under your feet suddenly, this change in relationship? I'm being serious. It's a slight change, isn't it?

Charlotte: It is a change. Yeah, because we were together all the time before. Then this past year when he was working at the pharmaceutical company, he was gone a lot so I could just do whatever. Not like do whatever, but I could ...

James: Ohhh.

Kevin: There's some stories I need to hear?

James: That billionaire that used to come around ...

Kevin: Yeah.

Charlotte: Yes. No, but just have my own routine, and then he just comes back with his bags and everything would be just kind of different. Then, it was the transition after you quit your job, in terms of transitioning back into the business.

I did everything. It was like, "Where do I fit in? How can I help you? How can I ...?" I'm like, "I'm the one who does the Facebook ads. You don't know. You didn't take Mark's class. You don't know anything about Facebook ads." Just transitioning and teaching him where he could fit in and what he could do.

Kevin: The hardest thing of coming on board is the transition from doing things that she tells me to do, to being proactive and taking initiative. Knowing the business well enough that now I can get up, set my own tasks, and contribute to the business without relying on her, as essentially a manager.

Charlotte: It's been quite a relief, because thinking of things for you to do has been exhausting. It was like it would be just easier for me to do it myself.

James: It starts like that and that's a really big moment when you've got somebody pulling their weight in that sense. I can imagine the relief.

Charlotte: Yeah, it's a huge relief. I always felt like I was just providing a little motivation. Okay, this is what we have to do today. I almost wanted him to take the initiative and know the things that are in my head, to just go and do it.

James: You're getting there now.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Kevin: I'm definitely getting there now. It's been a process, but that just is what it is. Thankfully, now I am onboard and taking over some aspects of what we're doing.

Charlotte: You're even writing your own book.

Kevin: Yes.

James: Then you can start doing his ads.

Charlotte: Yes, that's true.

Kevin: There's a lot of pre-work that I have to get doing. Get the whole Facebook thing set up.

James: What can you tell us about your book?

Kevin: It's still embryonic at this stage, but it's going to be in the YA Fantasy space. Like a high fantasy book. A good comp would be the Witcher Series. It's a series of novels, yeah. They're a little bit darker. This is little bit more

lighter and YA. Hopefully, I can devote enough time to it that I'll have something done by the end of the year, but we'll see.

James: A power couple.

Kevin: The thing is, it's been the inspiration of Kate really pushing herself, producing work, and building this business; really being the driving force. You know, really showing the path, and giving me the courage to go ahead and try and do something on my own, and write my own book.

James: Fantastic. Well done, Kate/Charlotte.

Charlotte: Thank you.

James: It's not an inspiration to everyone, because there'll be some authors who aren't married, are not in a relationship, sitting there by themselves and going, "I wish I had a free helping hand." Actually, in some ways it's very traditional. I mean 200 years ago, that's how businesses worked. It was the only way they could work.

Charlotte: Family business.

James: Family businesses. People mucked in together. This is kind of a new wave of business now, that's happening in this digital space. I think it's going to become common in the future.

Charlotte: We know of a lot, especially in romance, there's a bunch of husband/wife teams.

Kevin: Husband/wife teams.

Charlotte: Yeah, they even write things together, which is kind of a whole new thing. I can't imagine.

Kevin: Yeah, we're not there.

James: The billionaire needs to cross into a magic mirror in the back of his wardrobe to get into his world. Who knows.

It was quite windy out there in the desert in California, as you heard; but a really nice set up. It was so fun to be with both Natasha and Charlotte as they talked about, and you can hear the excitement in both their voices. What we always point out, Mark, don't we, with successful authors, is you can hear the business focus in their voices as well, which is absolutely a key part in this.

Not just seeing yourself as an author; seeing yourself as somebody who is running a business.

Mark: Two halves of the same coin. You'd be very lucky to break through just with being a budding writer. It's possible. It can happen. I've seen it happen a couple of times, but the odds are certainly against it. You really do need to be a good writer, and also to be a good marketer. Be prepared to roll up your sleeves with that kind of work as well.

James: About twice a year I ask Mrs. Blatch if she'll do some filing for me.

Mark: I was going to ask.

James: I am met with a fairly abrupt response.

Mark: Isn't that when I see you with a black eye?

James: Yeah, exactly, just after that. Then after six months, I've forgotten, and I make the mistake of asking her again.

It's definitely, and this is probably a bit of an elephant in the room for some people. It's not for every couple, absolutely without question. You have to have a certain relationship where you are going to be very happy to work with each other.

The real test I think is probably if you're unhappy with what your other half has done; can you confront them about that, and tell them that, and ask them to do it again? If you can't imagine that conversation taking place without there being repercussions to your relationship, then I would suggest it's probably not, necessarily, going to be for you.

Mark: Yep, I think that's good advice.

James: Okay, good, excellent. Excellent. Well, thank you indeed to Natasha and Charlotte/Kate for their interviews today. That was fantastic. We will be back in a week's time.

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