

PODCAST 42: SELF PUBLISHING 101 – THE LOWDOWN – WITH MARK DAWSON

James Blatch: Hello and welcome to podcast #42 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 Blatch: Well, this is exciting because we are, all three of us, the triumvirate that is the self-publishing formula is together, and I like also, if you're watching this on YouTube, we've set up a couple of cameras hopefully to capture this, but what we've done is we've done a hierarchy of height.

Mark Dawson: I'm sitting in the throne.

James Blatch: I don't need to do that. They can hear the microphone.

Mark Dawson: Oh, yes.

James Blatch: Yes, you're sitting in the throne. I'm slightly below you, and then cleaning up the floor below us is John Dyer.

John Dyer: I'm on a much smaller throne.

James Blatch: John Dyer, you've not been on the podcast before, I don't think, but you are one of the three of us who runs SPF. Just introduce yourself. Who are you?

John Dyer: I'm John. I don't quite know what I do at SPF, but I understand it's invaluable.

Mark Dawson: I don't know what John does.

James Blatch: I don't know what John does, but anyway. Well look, the reason we're here today, we should just explain to get things going, and we're going to say right from the off that this episode is going to be about our 101 course which is live and open at the moment.

We're going to talk a bit about what it's like from the end of the manuscripts and what you do next and how you get there, and we're going to talk about how our course works, but also other things. If you're not going to get the course who may be a bit further on of what people have found.

The reason we're here in London is because we've had a handful of our early students stuck their hands up very quickly and said not only would they happily do a testimonial about the course, which we're very grateful for, but they've got on trains, they've got on planes, and they've flown into London to be filmed by us in this lovely little studio in Bloomsbury.

Mark Dawson: I think the real reason they did that was because they knew John would be here.

James Blatch: You are a celebrity.

Mark Dawson: He's a very handsome man.

John Dyer: Ah, yes. You don't even need to say it really, but I'm the reason they're here.

James Blatch: It's great. Dan's flown in from Belfast. We've still got Claire to arrive shortly. We've had people come from the south coast. In fact, the

person who's come the furthest came from Mexico, but he was already in the UK.

We sat them in the seat that you're sitting in there, Mark, in the studio, and we just asked them why they bought the course, what they thought of it, how they think it's going to change their career, and whether they thought it was priced correctly, which is something we have to think about as well. I have to say we're going to hear from them in this podcast, but we've had some very flattering and very nice answers from people.

Let me ask you, man in the chair now: are you pleased with the way the launch has gone and the way the course has turned out?

Mark Dawson: Yes. I'm delighted with how it's gone. We've enrolled over 600 students I think now; probably by the time this goes out it will be near 700. We've had some absolutely amazing feedback, and the fact that people have been prepared ... Not just to travel, so in Dan's case to fly from Belfast to come over here and spend the time with us. It is the fact that they have taken time out of their busy lives, writing schedules, they've got workouts to hit, and they just wanted to come down to London and hang out with us. That's really, really flattering. Whilst you guys have been busy doing whatever it is that you do-

James Blatch: Important work forming.

Mark Dawson: Whatever. I'm doing similarly important work, drinking beer and coffee in the virtual green room, which has turned out to be the pub down the road. We've had some really great conversations. All kinds of different genres represented, from action, adventure, non-fiction, to cowboys and Indians, and really the full spectrum of John as a representative.

People at different stages of their careers, so we've had some who were reasonably advanced but had the cause to be valuable in that it maybe

corrected some bad habits, and then we've had others, like my friend Steve who I went to school with who's just starting out. Very excited. He's got three books he's working right now, and is basically standing with his mouth in front of a great big force that that's just going to ... Pump is a terrible analogy. I'm going to have fire. Knowledge bombs.

James Blatch: You are a writer, just to clarify.

Mark Dawson: I know, but it's really, really great, and it's massively flattering. It isn't just these guys as well. People on the mailing list would've seen an e-mail I sent out on Monday as this podcast goes live, where I just asked for some Facebook testimonials. At the time I posted, it was about 35.

John designed a nice page and we sent those out. At the time of recording it now it's over 40, and I'd expect it to be more, and some of those have just been so flattering. It's great. We've had such a great launch, and, you know, of course that means we've made a little bit of money, which is good for us, but better for me is the fact that people are really, really engaging with this course. They're getting tremendous value out of the Facebook community that we've set up, and they want to be a part of some of the exciting things we've got planned for 2017 and onwards.

James Blatch: Let's talk about the money a little bit, because we are being noticed in the online courses community as well. People are sort of turning heads, and I think for the Teachable platform, which is one of the major players, probably the major player for people who want to make a good living out of online courses, I think I worked out we account for 5% of their total income.

We are their biggest customer; one of their biggest success stories, but I want to give a figure out there. Just because I know that everyone will say, "Oh, 600 times 397. These people are rolling in it. They'll be driving their Porsches tomorrow." One of them is. Actually, do you know what our

outgoings are? Neither of you will know the answer to this figure, because neither of you take any notice at all at our other figures that I do, but the outgoings for SPF are about \$200,000 a year.

Mark Dawson: I didn't know that.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: Good grief.

John Dyer: Are you sure?

James Blatch: Yeah. We're spending our current spend at the moment, and that's mainly you wasting money on Facebook advertising.

Mark Dawson: I was going to say, John, what are you spending money on. I'm not spending our money on anything.

John Dyer: Well, there's my drinks bill, and food bill, and yeah. No. I would imagine advertising is the key.

James Blatch: We'll do a really good course launch and that will pay hopefully our costs for a year, because the amount we invest in Facebook advertising, we must be a big client of Facebook's for the size of company we are. It's important for me because I think it's important that we run this company well. That we teach people to sell their books, but actually it doesn't matter because a lot of the principles are the same, and we can do. We've really cracked that. I mean, I think we're doing a good job, and so yes, it's a big company now. We've got four people working for us around the world. There will be more after this course without doubt. Now, what I'm on selling, it's open at the moment.

If you're writing a book; if you're thinking about watching it in 2017, very much where I am, then that's the person we had in mind, isn't it, for 101?

Mark Dawson: That would be one of the people. I think it's certainly that person who's just got a book ready to go, but it could also be, for example, Steve, who has, to date, has got three books.

There are some authors who have come down today who've got multiple books, and they were tossing and turning a bit about whether they should take the course, and decided that they would. I'm very glad that they did because it underlined that their foundations weren't as solid as they thought that they were.

With making some fairly simple changes and working on their mailing lists and their landing pages and their website and their offers and all of that kind of stuff, they're able to put a little bit more solidity in those foundations, which will enable them to build more substantially as they go on.

If somebody is doing really, really, really well, I'd say don't look at this course. You might be more interested in our advertising course, which we'll have again next year, but for those starting out and for those who feel they could do a little bit better, then this is one to have a look at.

As we've been saying, when people ask us whether the course is right for them, we often don't know what they don't know, so it's not always easy for us to answer that. The best answer is: we are very happy for people to sign up for the course on the \$39 payment plan. They have a 30-day guarantee, and if after looking through the course, and that's the chance to look at everything; all of the content is immediately available. If they decide that it's not something that they think that they'd benefit from then they can just get their money back, and we're very happy to process that immediately without asking questions.

James Blatch: We certainly had one person who said, even though she had a website set up, and landing page, mailing list, a convert kit account, the rest of it, it wasn't working for her. The first thing that she noticed, she

walked through the course, and she said literally, "I found out what I was doing wrong quite quickly."

There are people who certainly have the basics of a setup but are not there yet, and I think that's what I, from my point of view as a new author when I look at your teaching, is the focus you bring. It's not about, "You need a landing page. You need a website."

It's what's that website going to be doing? Why do you need it? This is how you set it up for it to work for you.

Mark Dawson: One of the things we did that we're quite pleased with, or I'm very pleased with how it's turned out, is we put all of the work, all of the walkthroughs and the technical stuff, we cut it out and stuck it into what we call the tech library at the end of the course. It's effectively a standalone modules.

All of the other modules are therefore unencumbered by that kind of technical detail. They enable me to talk on a macro level and to talk about the philosophy behind a certain tactic or strategy that I'm recommending. Then to tell people if they want to decide ... Say we're looking at mailing lists. We'll talk about why you need one and how best to optimize one, find readers and all of that kind of stuff.

Then I'm able to say at the end of it, "We recommend two e-mail services providers at the moment. We recommend MailChimp for beginners and Convert Kit for more advanced writers." If people want to set that up, James here recorded a five-part screenplay for Convert Kit. It's very, very thorough. I did one for MailChimp. You can then go to the tech library and then, at your leisure, sit down, go through it step-by-step, pause it, takes notes, whatever you need to do, without that having to distract your attention by being in kind of the main body of the course itself. Some of the guys I've been speaking to today felt that was a very effective way to deliver what can otherwise be quite complex information.

James Blatch: Since everybody started, these 600 students have dived into the course. We've had one typo, which didn't get through all the beta stages and all the testing that we did. There was one typo, which is pretty good from 20 hours of video, and numerous PDFs. That was your fault?

Mark Dawson: That was John's job. You had one job.

John Dyer: I get the blame for everything. All I can say is it's been corrected.

James Blatch: It has been corrected. I spotted something that I felt I could have done better in the Vellum, and also Vellum released a little update this week, so that got re-recorded, and we always do that anyway.

We're about to go through Facebook ads with a fine-tooth comb. Make sure that's up to date. Let's hear from a couple of our beta testers, first of all, before we hear from the enthusiastic young students who've been taken on. I wanted to hear from our beta testers. They got a first look at the course. Some of it has changed since they first did it thanks to their feedback. I've got two who I've interviewed for the podcast.

One is Carrie Gardner. Now Carrie, we know she doesn't work for us. She's one of our Facebook moderators, and she goes through some of the courses for us, but she's very thorough. I've got a brilliant story behind her which we'll use at some point as well. "We'll use." That sounded very rude. We'll use at some point. We will talk to Carrie about her story, because it's amazing, at some point. The other person is Andrew Turpin who we didn't know at all, simply one of the beta testers.

Mark Dawson: And Stewart.

James Blatch: No, I think we're going to save Stewart. We're going to save Stewart. I know what I'm doing. I do the production. Andrew Turpin, who we don't know from Adam ... Or we didn't know from Adam at the

beginning. He was selected as a beta tester. He applied through the adverts, same as everyone else did. I just interviewed them both about what they liked, what they didn't like about the course, and I thought we'd hear from them first.

Carrie Gardner: Oh, it's fantastic. I mean, I did not expect it to be as comprehensive as it is, because it's billed as the 101, not the Facebook ads for authors course.

In my mind, it was going to be somehow less of a course. Much more basic, an introduction, and it's not. It really is not that. If you've got your manuscript on your hard drive. You can sit down with this course and it will step-by-step take you through everything until you're published on all platforms, you're published in paperback. It'll hold your hand all the way through. It's so comprehensive that you actually don't need another course.

James Blatch: In terms of the instruction did you find it easy to follow? Where was it pitched? Did it require some technical know-how to follow?

Carrie Gardner: No, because where there has been technical know-how, it's explained. It's assumed that you don't know it. It's not assuming you're going in there with a certain level of expertise and when people are talking about KDP Select and all this, so you're going to know what you're talking about. Mark explains it, and you do, James. You explain it.

You go through it, and you make it clear, but you also then move on quickly so it's not pitched at ... How can I explain? Even if you're an intermediate person. It's basic and there's a ton of content in there for you as well. It's pitched perfectly in my view.

James Blatch: What about teaching mindset as well as the technical aspect of it? You referred earlier it took you a while to understand that you needed to treat it as a business. Do you think this course achieves that?

Carrie Gardner: Definitely. It's very easy to say, "Well, I want to be a writer. I don't want to be a business person." Honestly, if I had a choice, I don't want to be a business person, but you have to do both hand-in-hand, and it comes across very, very clearly. Not just in the modules in what's being said, but how the whole course is put together.

How you've got other people on board, but you've got all these other people, and you realize you can't just sit in and hope that things are going to work. There is a business, and it comes across very much that is how Mark has treated it from when he started, and that's why he is where he is today.

James Blatch: From what you've seen, Carrie, who do you think this course is suited for?

Carrie Gardner: I've been publishing for two-and-a-half years, and I've gone through the whole thing, and I've learned things. Honestly, there's not a lot that I didn't think I knew already, but I have learned things. If I was coming into it brand new, I could cope with it, I could keep up with it, and it would get me to where I am now in the time it takes to do the course, which is very frustrating.

I wish I'd had it when I started, because it would have saved me thousands of dollars spent on others courses that didn't work, and, well, months and months of spinning my wheels.

Ideally, I think it's pitched at the brand-new beginner, but also somebody that's got some experience as well.

Andrew Turpin: I started writing about a year ago. Always wanted to write a novel but never got around to it, what with work, family commitments and so on. Life was just too hectic. In fact, I started trying to put pen to paper about ten years ago, and schooled a bit, then put it down again; didn't quite get any further.

Just over a year ago I was majored under for my role as a corporate communications media relations guy with a large energy company. With the oil price having halved over the last few years, roles were not very plentiful, so I decided, "Right, I've got more time on my hands. I'll just sit down and give it a go."

James Blatch: Andrew, you put yourself forward to be a beta tester and you were selected by us randomly. We don't know each other, do we? Just say that. I think some people are thinking, have we just chosen our friends? We made some selections, really, based on experience and so on, and I think you're probably an ideal candidate just at the beginning of your career to have a look at the course.

Let me ask you then: what was your impression?

Andrew Turpin: It's very useful. Having gone through quite a steep learning curve on the writing front, then, you know, to try and get to grips with the whole marketing strategy that's required as well ... To actually get the thing out to market and to readers, and try and capture readers' via MailChimp or whatever. Very steep learning curve.

I've really found this course is a very compact, DIY kit that's been fantastically useful. It's saved me a huge amount of time that I'd have otherwise had to sort of ... You know, I spent a lot of time going through various ad hoc routes to piece together the various components of what's required, and no doubt I'd have gone down a lot of blind alleys while I was trying to do that. Yeah, it's been really helpful. Very good.

James Blatch: Did you find it technically easy to follow?

Andrew Turpin: Yes, it is technically easy to follow. I mean, what you've done is lay out the step-by-step process for everything, really. From Amazon through to MailChimp and the other e-mail operators. Yeah, through to using think like BookFunnel, which I probably wouldn't have sort

of clocked onto otherwise. Yeah, very comprehensive, and I think it's easy to dip into if you need to go back and sort of recheck something. Yeah, quite very user-friendly.

James Blatch: In terms of the impact on your career, you say that you would have gone online. You probably would have found out the ways to do things.

Do you think it's possible you would have got there without the course?

Andrew Turpin: Well, I might have got there without the course but it would have certainly taken a lot longer. I mean, I've heard Mark talking about his early days in self-publishing and going down endless blind alleys, and talking about the nightmare of trying to do things manually rather than use MailChimp or whatever.

Probably got there, but it would have certainly swallowed up a lot of time. Which, you know, I could be very valuably using trying to get stuck into the second or third books. I think the most valuable use of a writer's time is to write, and if you're sort of spending a lot of time trying to work out the technical side, that time's all gone. I think it's certainly going to be a big time-saver for sure.

James Blatch: That's Carrie and Andrew, and obviously they were both very pleased with what they found. We started to get a hint. I'll tell you what's an interesting ... Let's be honest and transparent about this. We are transparent about as much as possible in terms of how much we price the course at.

When you price a book you have to think very carefully about this, and there's a point at which supply and demand curves, and all the rest of it, and my hunch, and I'll be honest about it, is I think we've under-priced it a little bit. I think the course in terms of value is worth more, and I think we've perhaps had a few fewer students, but I think we still would have been

better off with a higher price. I don't know whether you agree with that or not.

Mark Dawson: I think it's immaterial now because people have got a bargain for this course.

James Blatch: Well, I'll tell you what, that's a very clear message. I'll tell you as the person who does do the figures for SPF, this course will never be sold at this price again.

Mark Dawson: No. We have under-priced it, but we looked at it for an awful long time. We did a survey as people joined the mailing list and one of the questions was, "What would a course that solved your self-publishing problems be worth?" Or something along those lines, and kind of the median was, unsurprisingly, you had all options and most people went for \$99. Fair enough, but about 25% said more than \$399.

We thought about it and, in the end, because this is the first time we launched the course we weren't entirely sure what the right price point was. My wife was telling me that we've under-priced it because I said that we're going to go for \$397, and it turns out I think she was right. There's loads of value in the course. The bonuses themselves are worth more than the course fees.

These aren't kind of throwaway bonuses that we could just chuck together. They're valuable bonuses. Things like formatting, website design, images, all that kind of stuff that people will actually need. It isn't kind of a periphery.

This is something that people will need in order to successfully launch their books, and they're worth more than the course is worth itself. Yes, we definitely did under-price it. We definitely won't price it at this point again. I think probably next time it will be \$597 or something along those lines. It's going to be higher. Yeah, that's not a bad takeaway. If people are on the fence and they'd like to look at it now-

James Blatch: They won't get a chance to buy it for \$397 again.

Mark Dawson: Go for it now because that's not bad advice.

James Blatch: Yeah. Okay, so we should give a shout-out. Stewart Grant is going to be in our next little montage coming up in a moment because he came down here today to give us some testimonial interview, but Stewart was also one of our beta testers and he did a great job and we got some great feedback, thorough feedback from our beta testers that enabled us to shape the course to the way it is today.

That's the other thing that I just want to talk about before we go into this montage of the people who've come down to see us today. I look around at the self-publishing world; the thing I'm proudest about this company is the way we have little spark here for a community, which I'm thrilled to be a part of, let alone a leader within. You know, somebody who should help shape it, but a part of this community feels, to me, an energizing thing for my book-writing career.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, it's an amazing community that we've built. The Facebook group itself, we've got several now. We've got kind of two, three Facebook groups based on beginner level and then advanced marketing. We've got our mastery group, which is the advertising group with over 2,000 people in it now, which is as vibrant today as it was the day we opened it, and then we've got this new genius group, which is the secret private group for people who've taken the 101 course.

That already is buzzing all the time, and I'm in there quite a lot at the moment because people are tagging me and asking me for my opinion. Which, I'm completely happy to be able to at least try and provide answers to those people. It's a really exciting place to be.

We've got some exciting new plans with people at InstaFreebie. We're going to be rolling those out next year. There's an InstaFreebie Facebook group that we've set up as part of the course. That's working. We've got Ashley from InstaFreebie in that group who talks directly with authors, helping them to run their promos and add potentially hundreds of

thousands of new subscribers. From top to bottom, the community that we've built up is exciting. It's, as you say, it's energizing. It's cooperative. People are collaborating. It's a really fun place to be.

James Blatch: Yeah, and it's amazing to meet people, isn't it?

John Dyer: Well, I think one of the takeaways from today from all the people that we've met has been it's this amazing support network that you get with the course. That is an enormous amount of reassurance for people who are spending the money on the course to know they can dip into these groups.

We've heard several stories today where people have gone there and found the answer to a question that they didn't know they needed to ask in the first place. They found the answer to it. I think that's fantastic. That is worth something in itself.

James Blatch: Yeah, and as friendship, we know that you can have virtual friendships today which can be as meaningful as real-world friendships, and that was an example of that today. In fact, Carrie, one of our beta testers from our last little montage, is a virtual friend of one of the women who's going to speak in our next montage, and they have a very supportive relationship for writing and so on. That's something that's come about through our little community as well. It's an isolated career, writing.

John Dyer: I was going to say, it's a lonely existence, right, Mark?

Mark Dawson: It's a bit of a cliché, the writers sit in their ivory towers all day.

James Blatch: I've got one of those with holes in the ground.

Mark Dawson: We'd keep John in the tower.

James Blatch: I thought of a job for you. You can go and see if the red light is flashing in the back of that camera.

John Dyer: I've got a job.

James Blatch: Go and see if the red light is flashing on the back of that camera.

John Dyer: What do I do if the red light is flashing?

James Blatch: Is it flashing? If it's flashing it's good.

John Dyer: It's flashing.

Mark Dawson: Excellent.

James Blatch: You can sit down. You're going to need to check every couple of minutes.

John Dyer: I want a drink.

James Blatch: Because it did click off in the first segment, and so it would have gone black for some people, so we'll keep an eye on that. Okay, look, shall we hear from our testimonial people? These are people who Mark posted in the group and said, "Look, what do you think of the course? Who wants to say something nice about it?" Oh, we would have been open for people.

Mark Dawson: Who wants to say anything honest is what I said. I'm very, very clear that we accept good and bad feedback. Just feedback is good, because if people have issues with it then, of course, we're able to very, very quickly go into the course, make amendments. We've already done that a couple of times.

It's something we continue to do as we add new stuff. Yeah, we wanted feedback and we got some really fantastic stories in the group. As I've said before, these people have been so generous to take time out of their busy schedules to come down and hang out with us today.

James Blatch: It's like a unit. It's like a lock-up in extenders.

Mark Dawson: It's a converted sweatshop.

James Blatch: Don't say that.

John Dyer: There will be bodies in the walls.

James Blatch: I tell you, it's a lovely little studio, and they sat in the seat you're in, so let's hear from them.

Stewart Grant: Hello, I'm Stewart Grant and I'm a starting author. Just taken

Mark's course. I was overwhelmed by how much information and content there is in it. The way it's laid out step-by-step, it really does guide you through the steps that Mark takes you through. There's so much value in each module and I'm just really pleased and honored to be part of the course because it's going to change my writing life.

Jack: Hi, my name is Jack and I'm a writer. There's one section that I find particularly useful, and that's where Mark keeps a whole timetable for two different scenarios, and all of the steps and what to do at different weeks and that kind of thing, and I found that really useful because I'm looking for something that's more like turning my writing into a business, sort of like a business plan, so that I can know exactly what I need to do when so that I can focus on my writing.

Stewart Grant: I think it's the step-by-step guides to things like Amazon. How to set up your page. How to get that meta data optimized. How to get

that audience. How to get up your mailing list. All those kind of things are things that I probably had an idea that I wanted to do but had no idea how to do, and the course has really taken me through each of those stages and enabled me to start those steps which have kind of put me off from doing anything.

Nick Warren: My name is Nick Warren. I write thrillers that mix action, business and psychology. My first impression was it's so comprehensive. What I was looking for really was something which would take me all the way through that first publishing adventure, really. You don't have to look very far online before you start seeing Mark's name come up in terms of teaching if you're looking for a teacher for that kind of thing. I think it's not just the individual areas he's covered, but it's the little asides all the time. There's just so much depth in the content. It's really good.

Claire: My name is Claire and I've been writing for a very long time and I've come down here from Nottingham today. Before I even bought the course, when I was looking at the list of the criteria and curriculum, and as soon as I read through that I was like, "I need to get this." Because it contained exactly what I knew I was going to need.

I've done the writing, I carry on with that, and I've got the mindset, stuff that's helping me be much more productive, but then what do I do? The course is exactly fulfilling that for me. Okay, well, what do I do with this stuff I've written now? Rather than chucking something on Amazon, I'm actually going to be able to put a book out there and get people to read it and pay to read it, and send me e-mails saying they love my stuff, and that's what I want.

Dan Fowl: My name is Dan Fowl. I live in Northern Ireland and I've been writing for the last, I don't know, ten, 12 years, maybe even more. I don't even know what year it is. He's teaching me how to swim through these shark-infested waters. His instructions, his teaching, is so detailed and relaxed. I'm confident that I'm going to be able to get this cracked.

Rachel: Hi, I'm Rachel. I've written ten books to date. I write in two genres: World War II fiction would be the genre I want to write in all the time, and I write in another genre that pays the bills. Despite the fact that I have a website and I have a Facebook page and I have a Twitter account and I have a mailing list, which are all covered in the course, I realize now that just having them isn't enough.

I haven't been utilizing them to the maximum, and I think my sales could radically improve if I just put the basics that I have in place. If I use them properly like the course suggests. When I said I was going to take the course I had quite a few people say to me that I didn't need it, and I think that's a misconception that's out there, because possibly because the name of the course is 101 Publishing.

People automatically assume that it's basic and it's for people who don't know anything about self-publishing, and I strongly disagree with that. It is a basic course in that it covers the basics, but if you don't have the basics right, there's no point in moving on to the more advanced stuff because you need the basics as a foundation. I think without this course I've built the house but the foundation it's on are rather shaky, so now I'm going back to make sure that's more stable and my long-term career will benefit.

Shena Conde: I'm Shena Conde. I live in a small village in Essex by the sea and I write stories and songs. For the last year I've been fumbling around in the dark. I've needed a plan and this is step-by-step comprehensive. He's a natural teacher, and so I think that it's going to give me loads of confidence and will give other people confidence as well. Definitely.

Steven Marriott: My name is Steven Marriott, a new author. I would say to people who know how to write but who have got no idea what to do next? Forget about everything else. This course covers it all.

Steven Moore: It covers every single thing from the smallest details that you thought you knew and you realize you didn't, to the wider picture, the long-

term goal. My name is Steven Moore. I hail from Mark's neck of the woods in Suffolk.

What it's done for me more than anything else, apart from all the amazing information, which I'm excited to start to put into practice, it's the confidence that it's given me. Where are you with your career? Are you at the point where you have one book out, zero books out or three books out? I think that anybody can find value in this course. There's so much for everybody at any stage of your writing career.

Speaker 17: I think we all face the fear, the fear of not knowing what to do, and the course enables you to take that fear away and say, "Right, I'm going to do this in bite-size pieces, step-by-step at my own pace, and it's going to teach me how to do those so that I actually get some success." It's made me feel that there may not be a huge audience for my books, but there will be an audience, and actually Mark has shown me how to go out and find those people via Facebook, via mailing lists, and just kind of generate some interest around what I'm doing.

Speaker 18: Outside of the videos and the PDFs that you get inside the course, there's also the closed Facebook group that you can only get in as being a member of the course, and I've found that tremendously useful because that's live interaction.

I had a problem about some editing and I put a quick search into that Facebook group. I got the answer that I needed from that group within five minutes. If I'd had to go and research that on the Internet, it would have taken me half an hour to an hour, so just that saving. If I extrapolate that over the whole course, it's going to save me days, weeks of time.

Speaker 19: You don't even need to ask a question. You just read it and then you think, "My God. I didn't know that was a question I needed to ask."

Speaker 20: Even just the Facebook groups that you get entered into by once you sign up, the information that I've gleaned from those groups alone has been priceless.

Speaker 21: For what Mark is giving you, \$400 is an absolute steal.

Speaker 22: I think it's too cheap.

Speaker 23: How many courses do you get and actually say, "Okay, what you need to do is you need to get a website. Here's WordPress," and that's it. That should be a separate call, but you've actually got someone working through how to set up a WordPress site. This is above and beyond what you might expect. Because again, you've got people that are teaching you how to actually, point-by-point, go through that. The value in the course ... It's hard to place a value on it, to be honest.

Speaker 24: Never has there been a better value for money. I've learned so much. People in the Facebook groups that come along with it all say the groups alone are worth the money, and I couldn't agree more.

Speaker 25: To be honest, when I received the e-mail as to how much the course was, I was blown away at how inexpensive it was. I felt that was a really, very reasonable price. I think what impresses me is that Mark isn't a gatekeeper of that information. He doesn't hold it to himself and say, "I'm going to do this on my own." He shares it with us, and it is a huge amount of information.

There's years of experience in that course which you just couldn't go on anywhere else, as far I'm aware. I really felt that, in terms of value for money, the course itself is amazing, but then there are a list as long as your arm of extras. InstaFreebie, website design, discounts, all kinds of other things that are involved in it, and the ongoing support. The community. The Facebook pages. It does feel at the moment like it's never-ending.

Speaker 26: If you don't know it and you can't find it in this course, it doesn't exist.

James Blatch: There they are. They're our lovely testimonial students. We offered to pay expenses and take people out to lunch, so we had a nice lunch in Carluccio's. You can see our photograph on our Facebook groups of us in there today. We paid their train fares and we paid their air fares if necessary, and we got several offers of people in California and Australia, because we offered to pay travel expenses.

John Dyer: I offered to collect.

James Blatch: Because people need collecting. Anyway, it was lovely that they came and spoke to us today, and thrilling for us to meet them, and I think they were pleased to meet each other; people in the course. I tell you what, Mark: SPF Live is something we've talked about a little bit, and you floated some ideas in the Facebook groups, but I am pumped for this type of event.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, we're very early on in thinking about ... A few people have suggested we could host something next year, and I think that is a possibility. Maybe one in the US and one in the UK. I think that could be quite fun. We could probably get some quite good speakers to come along now. I have a feeling we could get some quite interesting corporate sponsorship, which would enable us to put on at a cheaper price. Certainly something we will look at as the new year turns around.

James Blatch: Andrea Demanski had already said as long as we're in three hours of Georgia, we must go and all stay with the Demanskis.

John Dyer: I'm there already.

James Blatch: That was the Miami Vice boats trip.

Mark Dawson: Yes, for those who haven't seen that video, John's previous appearance on SPF TV was in the back of Andrea's boat looking windswept and handsome and kind of a slightly Indian Don Johnson.

James Blatch: Okay, so the course is open for a few more days. If you're listening to this on Friday then we are late in the week putting everything together, so this podcast may actually end up on slight delay, but we've got until ... When are we going to close it? Probably the middle of the next week?

Mark Dawson: Wednesday, I think, isn't it? Yeah.

James Blatch: Yeah, Wednesday, so you've got a few days left to have a look at the course. We mean what we say. We say it to people all the time. That refund is there because we know that the course might not be for everyone, and a good way ... We can talk to you about the course, as we have done in this podcast, until we're blue in the face. Actually, if you go in, have a look at it, watch the modules, then make a decision whether it's right for you or not. We're not offended if you ask for a refund.

Mark Dawson: No. Absolutely not. When we say it closes on Wednesday, we do really mean that we, for lots of different reasons, we don't accept students outside of the open periods.

We haven't completely scheduled it yet, but I think the next time we would be looking to open this would be summer 2017. I'd say take it now. One other quick question. We do get some people who say, "should I take it now? Just at any stage," and, again, you've got the refund, but I would say just in terms of starting out, building solid foundations, and then working on your novel and getting it out there ... Or your non-fiction book; whatever it is that you're writing, you can't start learning this kind of stuff too early.

It's always going to be useful to think about how to find your readers. There are things you can do even in those early stages that will improve your chances of having a good launch. Yeah, I would say have a look at it. Once you buy it, it's yours for life, and we will update it as new things change.

James Blatch: Yeah. To somebody who is writing their first book, I think it's a nice way of having a break from your writing as you get towards the end of your book, and also to bring a focus to your writing. You start setting up your landing page and your early and your MailChimp accounts, all the rest of it.

Mark Dawson: Get the cover. Yeah.

James Blatch: Yeah, the cover done. It's motivating, but also brings a focus this is not just about an abstract thing, me writing a book. This is an asset of a business I'm creating.

Mark Dawson: Yup.

James Blatch: Good. Excellent. Well, have you enjoyed your first appearance on the SPF podcast?

John Dyer: I feel it's been stellar.

Mark Dawson: I want to see what the ratings are like afterwards. If they're down, this will not be repeated.

James Blatch: The slight problem is that John is the one who reports the ratings.

Mark Dawson: That's true.

John Dyer: Yes, so you'll never know.

James Blatch: Just massage the figures. That's it. We're going to say goodbye. We won't be talking about 101. It will all be done and dusted, but we will have a fabulous interview for you.

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