

PODCAST 47: MAILING LIST PART 2

James Blatch: Hello and welcome to podcast number 47 from the Self Publishing Formula.

Speaker 1: 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 Blatch: Hello Mark, how's your week been?

Mark Dawson: Good. Very good, James, thank you. Started doing recordings on a Tuesday and I'm kind of in the, hopefully the last sprint for the new Milton book, and I had an epiphany last night. Often happens just before I go to sleep and I had one last night.

I've been thinking this is potentially a very big book. I'm already at 91,000 words, which would be big for a Milton book and as I was drifting off to sleep last night it suddenly occurred to me that I've actually got two books, not one. So what I've been doing this morning is just looking at where a natural break would be and turns out that the natural break is around about 70,000 words in.

It's probably like another five or 10,000 words to write, which means that it'll come in at about 80,000 which is spot on for me and it will also mean I've got a 20,000 word head start on the next book. So all in all I'm pleased because I've got ... I don't normally put deadlines on myself but I've got Apple doing some promotion for me, but I've got to get the book to them by the end of the month, and Audible are also doing some quite cool stuff that we might be able to talk about in another episode, and for that I've also got to get a recordable manuscript for them by the end of the month. So I would've been rushing a lot, I think, to get it done but now I've got a bit

more time. I can concentrate on the quality and getting it up to the level I'm pleased and happy with. Generally speaking I'm in a good mood because it's been a good day so far.

James Blatch: Well that's a great thing to discover, isn't it, and there is a workload involved with books as we all know and to suddenly realize that not only have you got one book shaped in your mind, you've got a good head start on the next one. That's always a nice thing to hear.

Out of interest, I think it's a really important thing to have a notepad and pen by the side of your bed because I do the same as you. I'll often do that but I'm really bad at doing it, so that's why I said last week I ended up using my Apple Watch to scribble some kind of note, which turned out to be useless, and emailed my wife. It's the only way I could think of getting something out of my brain and into somewhere that I'd remember it in the morning.

Do you have a notepad and pen by your bed?

Mark Dawson: No, I just use my phone. I'll just grab the phone and email myself or open a note app to do that. Obviously, a notepad is fine too. It's really weird. I was thinking about this morning. I often have ideas late at night as my brain is going into random mode. It flies around in all kinds of weird places and then I also have ideas when I have a shower in the morning. So I suspect that's because I've set myself a problem as I go to sleep, and then I kind of subconsciously solve that problem whilst I'm sleeping and I often have loads of great ideas first thing in the morning. And then the other time I also find I make a lot of progress is when I'm running. I think it's just because you're not really focusing on the problem ahead of you, you're just kind of working around the sides a bit. By approaching things in that kind of capacity sometimes you can surprise yourself with what you come up with.

James Blatch: Definitely. I definitely find running is very useful as well, particularly if you go in the morning. I did this morning. It's usually the

second half of the run as well. The beginning is still doing normal thinking which is quite short term, then if you run for half an hour or so, I think the last 15 minutes you've settled down a little bit and then the things start popping into your head.

Same thing that happens as you go to bed. So yes, the way the brain works, find out how yours works and try and make it work for you, I guess. I'm still keen on doing an episode on productivity, which we will definitely do at some point. The people who think about productivity think about this a lot, about how your brain works and the best way of making things work for you.

We're in the middle of our mailing list episodes, so we're doing three of these, really focusing on this core part of an author's life, which is your mailing list.

We should say, I think we can be honest about this, we had a Twitter interview during the week we thought would probably fit in here but it turned out to be really good, quite long, very detailed, and we've decided to make that its own episode. This is going to be a really good episode coming up in the near future.

It's not about paid advertising, it's about organic ... Old style. Using social media, the bit for free, that you do. About how you can really make it work for you. We've got a cracking guest, somebody who's part of the SPF community who's really understood how to leverage Twitter for free, if you'd like, the organic side of it. We're going to package a giveaway with that as well, so that's going to be really good. That's going to come up in the future.

What we need to do is really focus on the key tenets of mailing list building. We started last week with the basics that you can do, again, for free, in setting yourself up. Mark set me a task, and he set you a task, so your task

was to get ten ... Was it ten we said to people, signups? By making these changes.

Mark Dawson: Yep.

James Blatch: You set me a rather lofty target of a hundred, and I'll tell you in a second how I've done on that. This week we're going to move on to paid advertising. I'll have an overview and a little bit of detail as well about the paid platforms, how they differ and where you should be looking at putting some money in.

Do you want me to tell you how I did?

Mark Dawson: Without further ado, drum roll please, maestro, let's see if you hit this supposedly lofty goal. I've probably gotten it whilst I was sleeping last night.

James Blatch: Yeah, you probably did. Well I did what you said. I went into Facebook and created the sign up ... To make sure they were there and I put something on Facebook. I emailed about half my contacts list. I'm going to do the other half next week, I just decided to long list, it took me a long time.

I didn't think the email was suitable for all my friends but it was for ... Because I've got quite a long, big contacts list so I did do that by hand and got bored at about K. So, I'll do the next one next week. It was great actually because I sent emails to people I don't see very often, including an RAF pilot, a guy who flew me actually in the Harrier back in the day, called Sean Bow who had become a very senior RAF officer and I met up with him for a drink about once every two years.

It was like a moment, thinking why didn't I have him on my list right from the beginning because he's the perfect person to talk about stuff. So, he gave me immediately a bit of banter back about ... He said "I hope there's a

good looking RAF pilot called Sean in your book." I said "No, actually there was a good looking BBC reporter called James in the book".

Anyway, so he's on the list and it was great to get in touch with people, and all that thing ... We were talking about do you feel a bit spammy, saying to your friends "Can you join my list?" And the reality is they're delighted, most of them are delighted to hear from you. Some just joined up without a fuss, I probably didn't hear from some who didn't but that's fine as well.

Anyway, so I have 44, 45 I think names on the list this time last week and I broke through a hundred this morning. So, I'm probably about 103 I think now. So, I have fallen short of the 100 on from where I was, but getting through 100 is what I've done and that's ticking over as it goes up.

Mark Dawson: That's very good. Yeah, excellent. One thing that we should probably clear up, the episode went down really well last week, we had an awful lot of people downloading it. It's one of our most popular one's as we thought it might be.

We got a question, more than once, and we're just talking about that Facebook optimization and people were asking how do you make the banner clickable. I don't think I explained that well enough, so I'll just tell everyone right now what you need to do.

The banner itself is not directly clickable. What you need to do is, and you can jump in here James because you've done this more recently than I have. You basically upload your picture as your banner image, then you click to edit it, it will open up a little light box for you. In that box, you have the ability to put in some text and a hyperlink.

What I would recommend is that you just draw attention to your office if people do happen to click the link. You can of course encourage people to click the link. One thing we do with SPF is we'll make that banner look like it's a button, or there's a button on the banner which, we might have a better copy that says for information on Facebook ads, for example, click this button.

Of course, the whole thing is the button. Nothing is individually separate there. As people click that banner they then go through to a little bit more space where we have more real estate to play with in terms of message and then giving them a clickable URL.

So, that's how you do that. It's not difficult at all. Most people don't know that it's possible. I definitely recommend doing that and then maybe playing with the image too if you want to encourage people to click.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: How did you find that went?

James Blatch: Yes. It is effectively the description of the photo, that's what it is. That's what you're using, so when you click on that you get a bit of description. You can put a date in there, where and when it was taken. The usual sort of Facebook thing.

You use that description so people click on the banner, that's what they see. Now other people can comment on that and they have done in your case, I looked at yours and people have commented down there. Your thing stays at the top because it's not a comment it's a description. Now I'm tracking through Convert Kit, I'm still getting used to Convert Kit, I do like it, I'm finding it very easy in terms of the automation, the sequences. There's a part of it I don't understand, which is the tracking.

I can see, for instance, I have 13, I think, sign ups yesterday and yet the analytics shows me one from Facebook and one from my landing page and that doesn't make any sense 'cause that doesn't add up to 13 and they're the only way people are coming into Convert Kit.

I need to dig a little bit deeper because I am keen, especially with our background in SPF, of tracking exactly where people are coming from and something I labored in the Twitter module and you labeled in Facebook

module that if you don't track accurately it's very difficult then to make the decisions that are going to optimize and really get the most out of your various platforms, your space on the web. I'd like to know a little bit more about exactly where people are coming from and also it helps my tag then when they come in.

I'm still discovering that and we'll do something on mailing list platforms. We'll talk about Convert Kit and MailChimp in the future of course and certainly I'll have a bit more detail on that. I'm learning Convert Kit and Infusion Soft at the moment 'cause we're moving to Infusion Soft and SPF and that is a whole different baby. It really is. It's the closest I've come to my old days of computer programming, which I did in my 20s. It's almost coding in the campaign building in Infusion Soft.

John Dyer, our third guy, hates it. I love it, so I'll have a little bit of that. Good, okay. Look that's what I've done this week. Would love to hear how you've done so please post into the Facebook group.

Mark Dawson: We'll leave the comments in the show notes.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: Of course we've got a few people leaving comments so I feel, I keep an eye on all of those and I've replied I think to all of them so far.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: So feel free to pop in there as well.

James Blatch: I got ticked off this morning for not putting my landing page URL in my Twitter description, which is correct. I did change my Twitter description but didn't put the landing page in there so I've changed that today but I did pin the Tweet as you suggested.

We'd love to hear how you've got on. Did you do your 10? Did you make those changes? Perhaps you had them already in place but it prompted you to do a few other things. If you didn't have them in place, if you're just starting up like I am, would love to hear how you got on. It's quite exciting even if they're your friends and extended family, to have them on your list is good.

If you've joined my list I'm guinea pig here. I'm completely open to what your experience of joining my list was like. What the emails were like. I mean it's gonna take three weeks, I think, probably a few to get all the ones that are in the sequence but certainly don't hold back.

Mark Dawson: You can be nice if you like but if you got something to say-

James Blatch: Mark enjoys it when I get criticized. Okay, look we're gonna talk about-

Mark Dawson: I'm looking forward to being able to get to the end of the sequence when we'll see pictures.

James Blatch: Yeah. Yeah they're nice.

Mark Dawson: That's when the unsubscribes happen.

James Blatch: Yeah exactly, well who knows? It may be when it takes off. Right, so we're gonna talk about paid. So so far we haven't spent any money, we've just been using what's available to us and let's face it, let's remind ourselves that there's more available today for free than there ever has been from all through in the past. Incredible platforms available and when you hear this Twitter episode you're going to be amazed. This guy's got I think 100,000 followers just doing some organic optimization, so we're gonna come to that down the line but today we're gonna focus on paid advertising.

Lets start with Facebook. Where would you say Facebook is? Is it still the Rolls Royce? The Cadillac? The big daddy of paid platforms, advertising platforms?

Mark Dawson: Yes, it definitely is. There's plenty of people who are kind of jostling beneath it trying to steal the crown away but at the moment Facebook is the biggest social media platform. It's the most mature. It has the best ad network. It has the best targeting. Everything about it is kind of top of its game so it is the one I would say that people should look at first of all.

I'm not just saying that because we have to teach a course on Facebook advertising and other bits and bobs. So you don't need to take a course to learn how to do these simple things and what we're gonna talk about today is we'll go through some of the ways that you can use Facebook Ads and then other ads, other paid ads, on the other platforms to drive traffic to your landing page or perhaps not even to your landing page when we're looking at things like lead generation ads. The goal is going to be to take those 10 people, or maybe in your case the 45 extra, and-

James Blatch: 55.

Mark Dawson: 55, sorry, 55. Okay we're gonna take them and we're gonna try and explode that a bit. Before we get into that it just reminded me one thing I think I should say is last week it all seems like it's very common sense to talk about, to go to people and ask them for something but as we mentioned it's something that people often forget to do or just don't feel comfortable doing.

So if people just take away one thing from last week it's getting into that mindset that it's okay to ask people to be on a mailing list. It's not an imposition. You shouldn't be afraid of it. It's definitely something ... I look at it as often people with opportunity. So you turn it around and make it a positive thing.

With that in mind we're now going to be reaching beyond people who might know us, either close acquaintances or distant acquaintances. We're going to be going up to people who don't know us at all, so completely cold traffic is how we describe this, and we're gonna look at three or four ways that we can do that and we'll start with Facebook.

So what we need first of all, and I suppose I should say if people ... It's quite helpful to see screen flows of how this stuff is actually done and people probably know we have a free resource for people that will demonstrate exactly how to do this. I'm not going to go into too much detail into what I's to dot and T's to cross 'cause you can get all of that with the free videos that we put together.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: I'll be posting those in the next week or so.

James Blatch: We should just say if you want to get onto that list you might want to wait a week or so for them to be refreshed but they are there at the moment. So if you go to selfpublishingformula.com/courses In fact on the main page it's the Advertising for Authors course that you should express an interest in because if you express an interest in that or an Ads for Authors that's when you're gonna get the three free videos. We don't send them out to people expressing interest in 101 because they are quite advanced but there's no harm in you going through them now. I mean the feedback we've had on that mini-course is very often people saying, "That was worth money in itself." It's just out there and it's a really brilliant middle course amongst them.

Mark Dawson: Another way to get is selfpublishingformula.com/ads. So that's another landing page that people can visit to get that. So either of those, it's not hard to find on the website.

I want to talk about the nuts and bolts of what to do but what I'll talk about is what is on offense.

There are two different kinds of ad campaigns that we can run on Facebook that will enable people to get people to sign up to their lists. The easiest and the one that requires the least back end work is what Facebook calls a 'lead generation campaign'. These were brought in I'm gonna guess about 18 months now and I knew immediately that these were coming down the track that they were gonna be real game changers 'cause they are just so cool and they convert at such a high level. It was obvious that they were gonna be really effective.

What it does is it enables you to advertise to interested potential readers, make them the offer about the free book, but the really cool thing about them is if they click on the ad, they're not taken off Facebook. All of the transaction web by you get their email address happens within the Facebook ecosystem and it should be obvious without me going into too much detail why that's good thing but the main reason is that it doesn't take them outside of that cozy Facebook environment that they are comfortable with.

It doesn't take them to another landing page, which might not look quite as nice as the Facebook platform. It probably doesn't look as nice as Facebook. It certainly would look different and all of these are good reasons why people decide that after all they don't actually want that free bit that you promised and they're not gonna give you their email address. It makes it much easier to do that and another really good benefit of these ads is they were originally designed for mobile. They're all available on desktop now as well but it's quite, it can be a pain in the neck to fill out forms on screens. I've got the iPhone 7 Plus and even on a decent sized screen it's still difficult to be typing in your email address.

So what Facebook lead gen ads do is they'll just, you basically tap to say that you're interested and you read through the offer and you tap again. Maybe one more tap but it's two or three taps then that is done. The email address is passed to the advertiser and then the advertiser is responsible, in our case, for providing the customer or the reader with their free book.

And if we use things like Book Funnel or Insta Freebie we can make that part of the process pain free as well.

These are the ads that I spend the most money on at the moment in terms of list building. I spend about \$50 a day on these ads right now and I'm getting sign ups around about between 25 and 35 cents a day, so we're looking at probably adding about 150 new subscribers a day.

Now not all of those will download the free book of course, that's fine, and all of those once you do download it not all of them will open it and read it or not all of them will open it and then not all of them who will open it will read it through to the end or like it even. But I'm comfortable and confident enough that enough people will open it and enjoy it and then will buy more of my books that these are profitable ads for me and they've enabled me ... I've built up a Facebook list audience now in MailChimp of about 30,000 Facebook lead gen subscribers and they are behaving in a way that I'd expect them to in terms of opening and clicking and interacting.

James Blatch: You say, "As you'd expect them to."

How do they compare to how before lead gen ads were around? Are they as active? Are they as good as that?

Mark Dawson: I take a step back actually and say that you can kind of work a hierarchy of valuable leads, something along those lines. The best ones will be the ones who've read through your book and have seen your sign-up offer at the back and then have signed up.

Now the reason obviously they're the best is because they have just finished your book and they liked it enough that they were prepared to go and sign up for your list and get your freebie. Get something else or not get a freebie if you don't have anything to give away. That's kind of the crème de la crème.

Beneath that you'd get to people who are coming on on a slightly colder basis and I'd include these kinds of subscribers in that cohort because they, at the stage they sign up they probably have never heard of you before. There's no guarantee that they will download the book. There's no guarantee that they'll like the book.

What you will see is, and I segment these guys so I'm able to track their behaviors quite carefully. You will see lower open rates, lower click rates in this kind of generated audience than you would from an organic audience. But provided that it's still within parameters that you consider to be acceptable, and that kind of goes beyond what we can talk about in terms of how you ascribe a lifetime value to each individual subscriber provided that you are in the black in that transaction then you should continue to invest in this kind of activity.

James Blatch: The lead gen asks just one small point. I noticed you used the word 'tap' and you're very good at the language you use when you put the copy in, which is very important. I know you AB split test a lot of this but you do use that type of language in the copy tap here don't you? You understand the environment people are in when they're receiving these ads rather than click, which is bit of a different environment where you'll want a desktop.

Mark Dawson: Yeah it depends how you serve them, yeah. You can tell Facebook to only serve to mobile. If you're only serving an ad to mobile it doesn't make any sense to use language that you associate with a keyboard because people won't be using a keyboard. So use stuff like tap. That does sound like a really marginal game and it is but kind of the analogy I like to use for this is looking at what the cycling team, the British cycling team, has done over the last 10 years or so. They have tiny, tiny gains. Even like changing the material of the skin suits that they wear but because they have so many of these small gains, when you add everything up incrementally it becomes quite a significant gain and that's why they're

better than everybody else because they pay attention to these tiny, tiny details.

James Blatch: Exactly.

Mark Dawson: The same kind of focus on detail is something we can take advantage of too.

James Blatch: I think they came up with the expression accumulation of marginal gains because they were asked so often in interviews, "What have you done?" It's a complex answer that involved 100 small changes. I get ticked off interrupting you so sorry about that.

Mark Dawson: It's okay.

James Blatch: I noticed in the YouTube comments.

Mark Dawson: Not by me.

James Blatch: No, not by you. Takiri I think but anyway, somebody stop doing that. Okay we haven't really talked about targeting. Before we move off of lead gen are you gonna talk about targeting?

Mark Dawson: Yeah just quickly. Not everyone will know how amazing the targeting is on Facebook so as an introductory level advertiser, what I would suggest is that you look to try and target your ad to people who you think are more likely to like what you're offering than not.

A good way to do that is to look at interest targeting. Facebook knows everything about us in terms of what we do on the platform and probably what we do off the platform too but that discussion's for another day. One of the things it does make available to advertisers is it will enable us to serve our ads to people who like something that we know that they will have in common with us.

So a good example of that for me would be, you see the covers of the books in the background. They're behind me, people who are watching on Youtube, but my books are compared often to Lee Child, Vince Flynn, David Baldashi, people like that.

What you're able to do with Facebook targeting is to send your ads to people who also like or who like those authors. Because I know that there is some kind of, there's bleed through between my readers and the readers of those guys. I can say with more confidence that I'm serving ads to people who are more likely to take the action that I want them to take.

So for you, you can look at someone like Darryl Brown or who was it that wrote Firefox? Craig whatever his name is.

James Blatch: Dean Koontz is never alone.

Mark Dawson: Craig Thomas.

James Blatch: Craig Thomas.

Mark Dawson: Craig Thomas, Dean Koontz. Yeah, all those kinds of guys who are writing those kind of military thrillers. You could look at Ian Fleming for the kind of the age that you're writing about. There are lots of different ways that you can reach those kinds of people.

You can even go slightly beyond that, beyond books, and look at TV shows and films. I'm slightly more reluctant to recommend that because there's no guarantee that somebody goes to the movies also reads books but sometimes it would be worth testing those.

Because you're able to target so precisely, you can reduce the cost of acquisition because you'll get more clicks. You'll get more conversions and all of that good stuff. Facebook makes it really, really easy to do that.

James Blatch: That was a great example of this, wasn't it? I can't remember where we used it. It might've been in an early SPF video, possibly one of

your emails, where a guy worked out that he could target his flatmate. I mean literally he could leverage the Facebook targeting system to work out that his flatmate had some allergies. He had some very unusual interests in hobbies and he basically used that system to send these adverts to his one person and it worked. It freaked his flatmate out.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, yeah. That's true, Social Sherpa is the website that's on. You did a Google search on them. Maybe we'll try and find that in the show but it does demonstrate just how granually you can target really incredible stuff.

James Blatch: Good, okay. So that's lead gen ads and once you start using Facebook advertising and you've talked to, you mentioned \$50 a day but obviously we're talking here potentially people starting out. What sort of money are we talking about in the for me starting out?

Mark Dawson: The minimum is \$5 a day so maybe you spend \$25 a week, something like that. That's not something to just throw away because obviously that's a lot of money for many people so the best level you'd want to be starting I would definitely recommend not to go too much higher in that when you're not experienced because Facebook will be very good at taking that money.

If you've paid for those ads you will, they quickly will be sending that money to Mr. Zuckerberg's bank account. So you want to be cautious on that and also as you get started there will be testing you'll need to do so I'd counsel people against expecting their first ads to go like gangbusters because it's not likely to work out that way.

You need to be bit of circumspect and to build in a little bit of testing, a little bit of experimenting until we find the right combination of image, copy, and targeting. Once you do find that you can slowly start to scale it and before you know it you can be adding 150, 200 subscribers everyday if you've got the budget for that.

James Blatch: And does this require people to have a lead magnet? To have a book to give away or novella to give away at this stage or can I advertise free publication?

Mark Dawson: You could. I don't know if I've seen an ad in the last couple of years that I would've clicked on if it wasn't offering me anything at all in return. So you could say, "There's a new book coming out." It kinda depends.

If you could get a blurb from Dean Koontz saying that the new book by James Blatch is a game changer, you have to read this, you could potentially get some action to use that kind of quote and say sign up now for an exclusive launch offer. Something like that or you know you could think about it but it's possible to think about a combination that might work. The classic formulation does include something in exchange for something else, so it is an email address that's being given over. It's not tangible in the same way that a book would be but it is intensely personal so you do typically need to give something away to persuade someone to trust you who, let's be honest, they don't know who you are. If they see your face James there's no way they're giving you-

James Blatch: The most trustworthy person. I'm fully clothed.

Mark Dawson: Yes, yes. At the moment.

James Blatch: Always a bonus.

Mark Dawson: We'll pass over that one quickly.

James Blatch: Yeah lets move on.

Mark Dawson: Typically it's a good idea. I would say yes, it's gonna be more effective but again if you don't have anything there's nothing to stop from testing to see how it gets on.

James Blatch: It's interesting to hear people's experiences. People will have tried without lead magnets or that's not how you've been getting on. One of the things that happens once you do start running these lists is that when you start you start rather cold and you don't really know quite what targeting's going to work and so it is inevitably going to be more expensive at the beginning.

We occasionally see people posting to the Facebook group who literally just started in their first week and they're despondent because they've lost their first \$25 and they've got two subscribers. Well do you know that is going to happen? Gonna tell you now because it's very difficult. It's quite a complex series of choices you make and you need the information back to really start optimizing that but it is a virtuous circle so the more you advertise, the more you learn, the more you can optimize and one of the great things on all these platforms, we're gonna move on to the others in a moment including Facebook, is you can then start to use Facebook's own algorithms to help you currently. So when we move on to, for instance, look alike audiences.

Mark Dawson: Once you've got I'd say a few hundred subscribers, ideally I'd recommend 1,000 but you can do it with less, is you can tell Facebook to start to take your main list, you import that into Facebook, and then you tell Facebook, "Build a look alike audience based off of this list." What Facebook will do is it will try and pick out the data points, the similarities, of all the people on your mailing list and then it will try and build you a new audience of people it thinks are quite like those people. So the big benefit of that is then instead of your 500 strong list, something like that, you could advertise to that but you'll chew through it in a day probably.

The difference where the look alike is is gonna be at minimum two million strong in the US. A little bit smaller in the UK but we're talking about hundreds of thousands of people. And those kind of audiences have

always been the best performing for me when it comes to, especially for sales ads.

I've run the same ad into the same look alike audience for six or seven months at a time sometimes. Sometimes people will be seeing those ads more than once but it doesn't matter, they still make more money from me than I spend to run the ads.

So they're really powerful and that's one of the currently unseen benefits of building a list is that you open up those kinds of new targeting options that otherwise you wouldn't have.

James Blatch: I say the more you advertise, the more data you get, the easier it is to start being successful with this but it is, like all these things, it's a reasonably tough start so do prepare yourself at the beginning. Your first dollars that go in are an investment, right Mark? People shouldn't expect to put \$5 in and get \$25 worth of book sales straight away. It's like in editing. We say 'slow' and the whole social media world things move fast than they did 10 years before all this stuff but nonetheless. Perhaps we are a little impatient sometimes. Okay.

Mark Dawson: Yes.

James Blatch: You've got a, I think, in some of the next one we talked about before I didn't quite understand this. You talked about defray the cost. Is that a typo? Is that something I don't understand?

Mark Dawson: You know the word 'defray'?

James Blatch: Not really, no. I need to expand my vocabulary.

Mark Dawson: Probably, it means reduce. So if you defray the cost of something it means you basically make it cheaper. So one way you can do that with ads is, well there's two ways really.

For a list building ad one of the things I do is I'll use what I call an upsell. So as people join the list one of the first emails will say here's your free book or your free books. One of the emails that I'll send them early on in the process is offering them maybe the first four books as a box set and even though they've got say two books for free, it's still cheaper for them to get books three and four by buying the box set rather than buying them individually. So I make that obvious and make it easy for people to see that then often times you can get people, especially if they've started reading and they know they're gonna like the books, they will then go to Amazon and buy the box set.

So that is revenue that's been generated through the lead generation ads, not just getting a subscriber. I'm also getting a sale and you can use that, the royalty. So in my case a \$6.99 box set is gonna me around about \$4.17 in terms of a 77% royalty.

You can use that to reduce the cost of acquisition so instead of, say, costing me 40 cents, you get enough of them sales and maybe you can drop it down to 20 cents. Plus the other benefits of selling anything on Amazon, so increasing your rank. Increasing the chance of getting reviews. Just generally your visibility will go up so it's definitely, it's worth it to make that offer. Put it out there and see if you can get people to buy something a little earlier than you might think you should be asking them to.

James Blatch: Yeah, and we've had some really good examples of all this. You've effectively been building their list for free because they managed to almost neutralize the cost of acquisition as you say by doing the would you like fries with that option. Okay so Facebook we're 35 minutes into this, we're still on Facebook. There's a bit more isn't there?

Mark Dawson: Yeah just another thing in terms of reducing the cost. One thing you can do is to run a promotion with another author. So something I did a couple years ago with Russell Blake, who writes similar books to me,

is we both put out the first books in our series. So 'The Cleaner' for me and 'Jet' for Russell.

We put them together and we had an image drawn up that made it obvious that people were getting two books from two different authors and then we shared the subscribers and we shared the cost of the campaign. So Russell and I, I think we added about two and a half thousand subscribers. It was all very obvious to people that had been added to two lists so we didn't get people complaining about that. They were getting two free books from two authors they hadn't heard before. Maybe some of them would have gone on to enjoy both of our books or maybe Russell's or maybe mine but the benefit to us chiefly was that the cost of acquisition was half of what it would've been otherwise.

If money is an issue and \$5 a day seems a bit steep then hook up with someone else and maybe you can do it for 2.50 a day. Share the subscribers. That's a really good way to get an early jumpstart at a lower cost.

James Blatch: We want to talk about some exciting areas. We're going to talk about BookBub and Amazon ads and really the new kid on the block and that is very exciting. I know people want to hear about that, so let me just deal with, or let us deal with, Twitter lead ads and Google ads. The AdWords platform and YouTube videos. Now because the reason we'll deal with them a bit more quickly is our experience so far is I wouldn't write them off completely and I think it's absolutely essential that you understand the platforms and you dip in and out from time to time.

But in terms of the returns we've had we've struggled to really optimize and to get good returns on low value products, I.e. books. So when it comes to the course, which is a high-value item, no problem at all really. YouTube better than Twitter ads but nonetheless Twitter ads has worked as well so we've been buying leads at a good price and even during the course opening period we were registering sales through alerting people to the

fact that course is open using YouTube in particular. That was great and that's something we'll invest in a lot more in the future.

When I've tried with your books and I'll try again with my books in the future, it's been harder. So we've been paying 45, 50, 60, occasionally knocking on a dollar per email address and that's gonna be not necessarily sustainable for you when you then break down how many of those people are end up gonna buy your book. So we're right on the edge of profitability with that and occasionally into loss and I know that some people have had more success than I have with that particular genres but the platforms are there so lets deal with them quickly.

Twitter actually have lead cards. In fact they had lead cards before Facebook did so you can create little Twitter adverts in slightly difference sizes depending on which advert you use. They called them cards and you go into the Twitter ads platform, you create your card and if it's a traditional card what will happen is that you'll have a clickable link in there that will then take them to wherever you want them going.

Classically we would advise you have a nice clean, crisp landing page for that. The Twitter lead card is a smaller, thinner card. Looks quite nice. Limited amount of text. They just recently increase the number of characters you can have actually because they've taken, as you might know, they've taken the image out of the counting towards your 140. So it was something like 127 characters I think they gave you once they included the card. It's a bit more now but you don't want to be too wordy on Twitter anyway but the lead card works in a similar way to the way we just described.

You would click on it and then you'd get a second click to confirm that you're happy to hand over your email address in return for whatever it is that you're offering in the advert. So a mini-course for SPF or a free book. John Milton starter book or start a series for instance and they've played about with this a little bit with the MailChimp integrations, which have been

on and off over a little while and MailChimp will say they're currently still working on this. I can get it to work at the moment. I know other people can't but I went in and tested it recently. It's still working but that can be automated, should be automated.

So it's passive for you. People click, the lead cards, and bang, it pops into your MailChimp account. Whatever it is you've got set up. I suspect what's gonna happen is they're gonna move to asking people to use a third-party. I think we use Zapier, is that right, for Facebook Mark to act as a go between Facebook and your mail accounts. We might end up with that on Twitter. They seem to be between and betwixt these two places but nonetheless. So that's the Twitter ads.

Now why doesn't it work as well?

Difficult for me to put my finger on it. I think I talked about this before. My feeling is first of all the ad's platform is geared around bigger enterprises rather than allowing smaller enterprises to use it profitably, and that's probably a conscious decision by Twitter.

If you look at the Twitter ads platform, they have some options for you like the promoted tweet option and they are colossally expensive. I saw one day it was \$200,000 for the promoted tweet that day and I've seen the kind of organizations that are using it are Disney and Coca Cola and the NHS in England, our hospital, so they probably got it for free. I don't know from Twitter, maybe they paid \$200,000 for it and then you come down to the level of platform, the type of ads we're using but it kinda gives you an indication of where they're looking. Where their heart is.

Now when I've spoken to my Twitter rep they dismissed this. They said, "No, no we're absolutely about small businesses" but if you're selling lawn mowers maybe that works. If you're selling books at 4.99 I think it's a bit of a struggle.

It's tested routinely. We keep an eye on it and if things change we'll let you know and I will be running more Twitter ads again soon so I'll give you more of an update on that but at the moment I would say you're gonna work hard on Twitter to get good returns.

YouTube

YouTube is the social media platform of the moment because despite the fact that ... It's got two things going for it, YouTube. One is it's almost, probably as ubiquitous around the world, as Facebook. I mean you can go into, and I travel a lot for my work so I can be in Sub-Saharan African, eastern Europe, or Asia and everybody has YouTube. You see it around, it's on people's phones.

My dad is 85 and he watches YouTube videos. My kids are 10 and 13, they watch YouTube videos. Everybody watches YouTube videos. Facebook, you could probably say has a slightly narrower usage, maybe not I don't know. The kids are all moving on to something else aren't they from Facebook, so it's seven then they come on Facebook a little bit older. Youtube does go across the generations. It does go across the geography and combine that with the fact that actually not that many people really understand the YouTube ads platform, which works through AdWords and they don't use it.

AdWords is very much geared up around the Google network ad so when you in there it's constantly trying to get you to use the Google network and put those adverts out that you've seen in the Google search returns and you really gotta kinda work within it to find the YouTube area. I'm surprised they haven't sectioned it off frankly because it's an unexploited area. So again though you have to work quite hard to get a profitable return for books and we're in early days with this so I'm not as confident in saying, "Don't try it yet," as I perhaps would with Twitter ads.

We've had great success with SPF. Moving into books I can see that as long as we can start to get the targeting and start to perhaps use some a

combination of both the Google search network and YouTube, I think we're gonna see some good results with that.

Both of these, by the way, are worth joining and having a little explore around. Not just because you might want to use them as paid platforms in the future but Mark, you talked in the 101 course about joining AdWords because it gives you access to keyword generators, etc. In Twitter if you join the Twitter ad platform you can actually create one of those lead cards and you can send that out organically as the Twitter interview that's coming out in a few weeks will demonstrate to you.

So there's a lot of reason for you now to go on, upload your credit card, don't start a campaign. AdWords will beg you start a campaign, in fact it forces you but just pause it right at the beginning. They won't take any money. They're big professional organizations. They're not going to rip you off like that but it gives you access to the platform and that's partly will feed into how you can get some stuff for free from them.

So we're gonna leave that there I think with Twitter and Google. Mark, now we're in the laboratory, right? So we come back from time to time on those.

Mark Dawson: Yes, exactly. So we'll quickly touch on that. I've seen we're gonna run up to the hour I think this time but I think it's all gonna be useful information for our listeners.

I'll very quickly just touch on a couple of other things that I think are worthwhile and I'll flag them as and we'll come back to in their own episodes later. So the most exciting platform for me at the moment, and this is Facebook but I would say in this here 2017 I think Amazon ads are gonna become something that all indies need to learn how to use. Until quite recently they were reserved for KDP Select Books, so you had to be exclusive to Amazon so take advantage of that. And because of that I didn't really get too involved in them because I'm only exclusive for a couple of books but as soon as I heard that they were available for

everyone, I've been spending a lot of time and quite a lot of money testing these ads out.

We'll talk about how to make them work for sales a bit later and that really is the subject for one or maybe even two episodes of the podcast later on. One really useful side effect at the moment is that you are only charged when you get a click. You can effectively get free impressions at the moment and thousands and thousands and thousands of free impressions. If you think about what advertising used to be about it didn't use to be about immediately generating selling. It used to be about brand awareness and teaching people about you-

James Blatch: The seven touches.

Mark Dawson: And what you have to offer. The seven touches, exactly yeah as we talk about. And one of those touches right now is effectively free on the biggest online retailer in the world so you can get free impressions of your ads right now and I've been testing these extensively for the last six weeks or so and I've had several million free impressions right now. Hopefully I'm selling most of those ad campaigns are returning positive returns on investment every single day just in terms of the sales that are recorded. Beyond that it doesn't take into account people who see an ad but want to buy book two or the print or all kinds of things that aren't necessarily included.

So we'll get into those in much more detail later. What I just wanted to kind of flag up for listeners right now is that it's a really good way to build your reputation and generate some awareness, which can then mean that people wander over to your Amazon page and if you set up your Amazon author page correctly you'll make it very obvious.

In fact every product page as well, we'll get on to this in a minute. Every single page on Amazon should have the ability for people to see you got

an offer and then a URL they can click over to go to your landing page and take you up on that offer.

James Blatch: Sorry, just to step you back a little bit for those of us who are unfamiliar with the Amazon ads platform at all.

Can you just give us a little overview? I mean where do they appear and what type of thing do you put in there that you can click on?

Mark Dawson: There are two kinds of ads. There are product display ads and sponsored keyword ads. Product display ads, for me, don't work at the moment so I wouldn't concentrate too much on those. Those appear on just beneath the buybacks on a book that you target.

So for me I might go for the new Night School is a new Reacher book. I would perhaps pay, this would be expensive to get on to this page, but I might say okay. Now the problem with that, I suspect this is why those ads aren't working so well is that people have already made the decision that they want to buy book A. If they hover their mouse over the buy button it's gonna take quite an offer for them to go, "Actually, I've never get this page. I've made the decision to buy it but I'm gonna change my mind right at the last moment. I'm actually gonna buy book B." So I don't think they work very well. I am testing them a lot but I'm not getting great results from them.

The other ads are called sponsored keyword ads. So if you are searching on Amazon and you searched for Make Me or Jack Reacher or Vince Flynn or whoever, because I've targeted a campaign that takes into account all kinds of different permutations of how you might be searching for those keywords. Provided that I win the auctions between all the authors who are bidding to be shown to the potential reader, my ads can appear in the search results and they can appear also on the product page as well. Those ads are working very well.

I'm seeing returns in investment. I think overall at the moment I've ran about 100%, so basically spend one get two in case people don't understand what return on investment means but believe me, when you get 100% return you should be investing all your money into those ads because they don't bring your money effectively.

James Blatch: A money machine.

Mark Dawson: Exactly, like an ATM. So those are working really well and the benefit, apart from the fact that you can and will get direct sales from those ads, is that you can also drive traffic to your relevant Amazon pages, which can then mean if you're smart you can send traffic to your landing page and get subscribers because the underpinning logic to all of this from my perspective is a subscriber is always going to be worth more to me than one single sale.

If I had the choice of you were looking for a book and you had the choice to buy *The Cleaner*, the first Milton book, or get *The Cleaner* for free because I know my books are quite hooky and once you get into them you'll probably buy another one and then you buy another one, I know that it makes more sense for me to give you that free one. Obviously now as you hear I'm standing on the street corner offering you gateway drugs because I know that you'll come back for that stuff, which I'll make you pay for later on.

So that's what I would say for Amazon as we will get into a lot more detail on that because I know the community is basically rabid right now for Amazon ads and we are gonna do a new module on Amazon ads in the new ads course that we're getting ready for March but they're pretty good right now. I think they could be really good as we push into the rest of 2017.

James Blatch: Yeah and we'll do our best to see if we can potentially at some point get Amazon on. The London Book Fair, quite a presence so I might if we can soften them up

Mark Dawson: No, no we're gonna get them on. They've already agreed. I've spoken to Amazon. We're gonna get the head of KDP is gonna come on.

Actually we'll probably get the cameras out and go down to London for that one. We can definitely ask questions about AMS.

So the other thing, and this is kinda topical. For those who watch it on YouTube let me just hold this up there. So what I'm just describe that for our listeners, it's BookBub. I've got a BookBub deal today on 'The Sword of God', that's the 5th Milton Book. Everyone knows about BookBub I'm not gonna go into details about why their featured deals are great, just take it from me if you haven't had one, they are great and you'll sell tons and tons and tons of books even at 99 cents. I used to make your money back and then some.

The other benefit that people don't always take advantage of with BookBub deal is that you are sending thousands of those emails. The one from my book today will go out to about a million people plus we have more than that now. So some of those people, a good number, will be curious enough to click onto my Amazon page to have a look at The Sword of God.

Now most of them won't buy it but maybe one or two percent will buy it but of those 98% that don't buy it, if I make it really clear that they can also have a free book, they can get The Cleaner for free, they might go, especially because they're bargain hunters. They're on BookBub because they like deals. They like good offers. They might well go, "Well actually he's offering me this one for free. I won't download that one but I will get that free book." Sometimes you'll get people doing both. Quite often they'll go, "Actually that's 99 cents, I'll get that. What the hell, I'll also get the free book too." So when I do BookBub deals typically when I optimize it properly you can look

to add several hundred subscribers on the day of a deal. I'll know tomorrow and maybe I'll mention it next week if I remember but I would expect 150, 200 subscribers as a result of that message being amplified across BookBub's subscribers.

My best every day I had 600 subscribers on a BookBub deal solely down to that. So that's something. I mean BookBub deals are hard to get. All the other ones that we've mentioned you can do them right now. You don't need to get anyone's approval, you can just do it.

BookBub you need to persuade them to take you but once you have been accepted and more and more people are getting accepted now I'm seeing a lot of people who haven't had them before are getting in now. You want to maximize the effect of that promotion. That's a really good way to do it.

James Blatch: Yeah. So it's another reason for keeping that Amazon author page as optimized as possible. I mean that to me, Mark, from my point of view is a lesson in itself in it's own rights. Optimizing that Amazon author page. We could perhaps do a detailed session of optimizing various places in a little bit more detail than we've done and not just for mainly the signups but for presence for part of those seven touches of looking professional, all the rest of it. So much we can do.

Okay I think we've spoken for coming up to an hour now on the paid platform and although our voices are lovely, there's probably a limit to which people are gonna get that amount of information verbally. So I think we're probably gonna draw this one to a close.

We have a final episode on mailing lists next week. We want these to be value packed but this is a stand alone mini series within it but mainly this is such an important part. It's something we're always gonna come back to and as a result of this overview series, the three episodes, we're starting to pick up these more detailed interviews.

For instance the one I just mentioned let's do an episode on optimizing pages. Let's put that in the diary because I would really benefit from that and I know others listening I'm sure would as well.

We're going to have the organic Twitter platform coming up and we will bring a interview coming up and we will also feed in all the little bits of detail like Amazon, etc. and BookBub who's been on before will come on again I'm sure for us in the future.

Good. Okay, so you haven't actually sent me a specific task for this week. I'm not going to use paid advertising, it's not right for me at this stage. I need to write. I mean obviously I tucked myself away this morning and did a couple of hours but that's my big focus at the moment is writing and I don't know if you've listened yet but we've got my editor.

My blog post is going up this week I should say, finally. So that's blog post number three, which has been a real hiatus during our course launch. I'm sorry about that but blog post number three has gone up and you can find that on selfpublishingformula.com and there's gonna be some more blog posts about the writing process that I'm going through at the moment and I'll bring you up to date on that when I finally get there and yeah, I think that's it. Is that it?

Mark Dawson: That's it, yeah. My voice is going. So I hope that was useful. There's plenty more stuff we can cover and next week we will have an interview with InstaFreebie and hopefully a bit of interesting news that will enable us to help others to maximize the effect of their InstaFreebie deals so that's all happening next week.

James Blatch: Absolutely. Okay, show notes available at selfpublishingformula.com. You can email us podcast@selfpublishingformula.com and join our Facebook group. You can find the links on our home page. Thank you so much for listening. Have

a wonderful week selling, getting sign ups, and writing. We'll speak to you next Friday. Bye bye.

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