

PODCAST 48: MAILING LIST PART 3

James Blatch: Hello and welcome to podcast number 48 from the Self-Publishing Formula.

Voiceover: 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: What was that? You just clanged something in my ears. Are you in your posh desk?

Mark Dawson: I am yes.

James Blatch: That's not your posh desk though is it?

Mark Dawson: No my posh desk is in the other room.

James Blatch: Your posh desk.

Mark Dawson: My sit down desk.

James Blatch: Well most desks you can sit down at but your desk ...

Mark Dawson: Sit stand.

James Blatch: Sit stand. Yes it's a very posh sit stand one, a high end one of course because you're Mark Dawson so only the very best for Mr. Dawson. It has these strange little depressions in them, which we found out putting cans of beer in when we were over there. We were wondering what they were for.

Mark Dawson: Exactly. Beer holders.

James Blatch: Beer holders. No it's a very nice desk and I'm getting closer to my garden office. I've narrowed down the company that I'm probably going to go with and I'm going to go and have a look at one or two of those that are already up to make a final decision. That I'm hoping is all going to happen in the next couple of months. I can not wait to move out of this office. Can't wait to have my own space and I think my family can't wait for me to have my own space.

Mark Dawson: By garden office, you do mean a shed don't you?

James Blatch: Well it's a posh shed. I'll show you a picture of it. In fact, if you're watching the YouTube version of this I'm going to put a picture of it up now so you can have a look at the sort of thing that I'm looking at. It looks really nice and I think, I mean I do work ... As I say, we talked out brain fm the other week and I've got a really good routine with that. It really helps me get into the zone wherever I am. It could be in a café or here in this mess that I'm in here in this room, but I think having that separate area, for me I'm quite excited about it. Having that space and just walking between the house and getting into there and getting on with it.

Anyway, so we talked about working from home quite a lot because it's an issue for most authors, probably all the authors listening to this podcast, whether you have a 9:00 to 5:00 job or you've made the break and you're doing this full-time. Where you write and how you write is something that just occupies doesn't it so we do talk about it from time to time and we will, I keep talking about this productivity episode we're going to do. It's going to change everyone's lives. It is coming. It is coming. We've got a really exciting line up, some really good ideas for podcasts in 2017, I've been working this week on video.

I get e-mails from people quite often asking me to recommend particular cameras or set-ups for doing live video, not least from Mr. Dawson who's

always asking me what you should have. I've started to put together what I think is going to be a really comprehensive guide for doing live video and recorded video that you then upload to YouTube.

What I'm not going to talk about in the podcast we're going to do with this and we'll do a proper guide giveaway with it. I'm not going to talk about the posh adverts that you might create for Facebook adverts or YouTube adverts because we dealt with those previously and we'll come back to them. But I'm talking about connecting with your readers, connecting with your audience. That could be live, you could be saying I'm going to go live. Mark does to his Milton crowd, I'm going to go live ask me any questions you want or you could say to people, ask me any questions you want, I'm going to do a Q&A next Monday and actually what you do is you record the Q&A once you've got the questions in, it's a little bit more relaxed and you can do a little bit better quality than you upload it and that's some other peoples preferences and then we're exploring crossovers of those, so we'll do a really helpful, I think helpful guide for the basics of getting that right and making it look good and sound good, what you can do for free, what you can do for a little bit of money, what you can do for a little bit more money, so we'll have three levels. The gold, silver, and bronze options of live video. That's one that's coming up.

Before all of that we are in the midst of our three part mini series on mailing lists, which is gold dust for someone like me starting out in their career. My mailing list is approaching 130 now, so I'm quite excited about that. I've been putting into practice the things that Mark's talked about. I stopped short of paid advertising at the moment. I think I'll get the book a little bit further along before I try some of that.

This week Mark we're sort of in between, I suppose, completely free things that you can do and paid advertising because some of the things we're going to talk about today is kind of a mopping up exercise, but the cooperations between authors, some of the services that are available to you to take part in pushes and I'm interested to talk to you about this, not

least because I actually don't really understand how quite a lot of them work. I know what they're called but I don't know how they work or what I'm supposed to do and I think quite a lot of authors in my position are in the same place.

Should we start, I know that newsletter swaps are something that we couldn't do just through getting to know other authors, perhaps they're our SPF community, etc, and they can be quite effective.

What I'd like you to do is just to explain for a dummy like me, what that actually means, a newsletter swap.

Mark Dawson: Okay, before I do that I will just round up what we had last week. We mentioned BookBub as a benefit of having a BookBub deal, apart from the fact that you'll do very well and sell loads and loads of books is that you can also leverage all of those thousands of new readers who are looking at your page to get some new mailing list signups.

I had a BookBub deal on, I think it was last Monday or last Tuesday for my Milton book, *The Sword of God*, and it was as effective as it always is. It got up to at least number 37 in the U.S. dot com stores, sold about 4,000 copies at 99 cents so work the math out fairly easily. 35% of that, you're going to be paid back the fee quite easily and of course there are lots and lots of other sales on Apple, Cobra, Barnes & Noble, Google, all those other places.

It was really effective as ever. I've never had a BookBub deal that hasn't been remarkably effective. And it was also effective in the other way that we mentioned last week. I made sure that the product page for *The Sword of God* had a fairly prominent notice that directed potential new readers to my mailing list.

They could get the first two Milton books for free and as I said last week, I'm not too worried that that's going to cannibalize actually downloads of the promotion book, *The Sword of God*. I didn't notice that it had, and even if it

did it wouldn't bother me because I'd rather have those people in my mailing list than buying a 99 cent giveaway because of course by the time they get on the mailing list and then they get ready to read through the series to *The Sword of God*, it would be back up to 4.99 again so there's that, but the giveaways were great.

Obviously I monitor my Mail Chimp list. I split them out into lots of different ones so I can see how they're performing at any given time. Top of my head I think I had about 150 new subscribers after that BookBub in the two or three days after that. Really, a very nice additional bonus that authors often forget is available if they just have a little bit of planning and just sort out their product page before they go live with the deal.

James Blatch: Yeah, and I know I saw there was a comment a couple days ago in one of our Facebook groups and somebody saying BookBub are nothing but consistent with their rejections of me. I know that there are lots of people, surprisingly some really good performing authors, who just don't seem to get BookBub so I know it's frustrating. We've had them on in the past, we'll have them on again, and the advice from them always is just keep trying, your day will come, which is all we can pass on to you about that. It's probably a bit of luck and the timing with that as well.

Okay, so now can we talk about newsletter swaps?

Mark Dawson: Yes, we can. A newsletter swap is pretty straight forward. If you and I both have mailing lists, one thing we can do is to promote each others books to that list.

You might say to me, "Would you do a mail out to your list about my new book when it goes live?"

Let's put it another way, let's say we're not aiming for sales but we're aiming for subscriptions, so you have a free book and you give it away in exchange for an e-mail address. What I could do is during my monthly e-mails to my list is to say "I've got a great offer for you, my friend James has written a

fantastic book, it's very much in the same kind of vein as the books that I write, and if you want to get a copy of it, you just need to go to jamesblatch.com and sign up" or whatever landing page you give me. Then I will then send lots and lots of traffic, lots of potential readers, to your site. The quid pro quo for that is that when I'm ready, or perhaps even at the same time, you then send an e-mail to your list saying that, "Mark Dawson writes these kind of espionage thrillers, if you like my book you'll definitely like his and he's also giving away, he's giving away a couple of free books, go to his site and sign up," and by doing that, you can spread out the readers between authors.

The only downside to that, and it's not even a downside, the kind of perceived downside is that it's kind of a jealousy thing isn't it? I don't want my readers to go and read your books because your books might be better than mine and they might not buy my books anymore because they want to buy your books. It's not something that detains me for too long because I think that most readers, there's more than enough readers to go around basically. Just the fact that I'm introducing you to my crowd doesn't mean that they're not going to come back and buy my stuff later and vice versa for you.

It's good to get into that cooperative mindset. Something that has, something that I've noticed in the Indie community ever since I got involved with it five or six years ago so that's something that we can all do to increase the benefit for everybody.

James Blatch: Yeah, I mean that's very much a trait of this community that separates it I think from more traditional businesses and probably the traditional publishing market, which can be a bit dog eat dog is the people are happy to help each other.

And you've got to think ultimately that you are looking at people who enjoy reading, rather than they have a very strict quota of books they read and

the moment they start reading another novelist they're going to drop you. This loyalty runs a bit deeper than that I would hope.

I mean I can remember you did one of these with Russell Blake. Actually you went a bit further with Russell didn't you?

You actually put some money into a paid advertising campaign with the deal?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, we did, yeah. We have similar kind of levels. Russell's been writing a bit longer than me. He's also faster than me, so he's got about 40 books, I've got about 25 now, but we write in very very similar niches. His series is quite similar to mine.

We're often in the kind of chance together and it just made sense for the two of us to get together and cross promote. What we did wasn't a strict newsletter swap. Although it was similar, we just paid for a joint Facebook campaign so we each put in 50% of the money and we split. We each had access to the list who signed up so they got two books, one from me one from him, and then we both got to add those and we added about two and a half thousand to our mailing lists, the same people added twice. We made it very clear that that was what we were going to be doing. It wasn't just one author, it would be two. That was really popular and that list, I e-mailed to that last week, it's still pretty active. I still get open and click rates from that so that's been a really good investment for me.

James Blatch: I mean that's a whole other area. You just mentioned that you mailed out to that list and we're talking about mailing lists, really we are focusing on building your mailing lists and different ways of doing that. But there's a whole other area which we haven't had time to explore in this mini-series really on how you then manage your list and not just technically what platform you have.

I'm intrigued almost just by that comment that you e-mail that list. You've kept that list separate that whole time. It's not integrated with the rest of your list and then you go to the effort of running bespoke campaigns just for those people, yeah?

Mark Dawson: Kind of. I keep them separate because all my lists are quarantined. They're separated so I know where they've come from, so I know those two and a half people came from that promotion.

James Blatch: Two and a half thousand people.

Mark Dawson: Yes. Yeah. What did I say?

James Blatch: Two and a half people.

Mark Dawson: Oh, yes, two and a half thousand people. We keep them separate for that and that does enable me to craft bespoke messages. But the one I referred to then is that there was a message out about my annual survey, which we'll talk about in another podcast episode down the line, and so that would be a broadcast e-mail which wouldn't have been changed, it just goes out to everyone. But I can then of course track to see what the open rates for that e-mail are depending on what list I've sent it to. There's loads and loads of great stuff in that there's more than enough content for an episode of the podcast right there.

James Blatch: Yeah, yeah absolutely. Okay.

Just on the newsletters before we leave it, where's the best place for people to find their newsletter buddies?

Mark Dawson: Forums are a good place. I think the Facebook groups we have will be good. We're looking to open up a series of genre specific SPF Facebook groups, which will be happening, may even have happened as this podcast goes out. We've started with two for sci-fi and music with

enough strange combination, but we'll be broadening that out to include fantasy, romance, erotica, everything really that people are interested in. And that will be a place for all of us to get together and to do things, to collaborate with each other, make things better for everybody in that genre. We'll also be linking that in with instaFreebie so that's something that's really the main nuts and bolts of what this episode is going to be about. We've got some interesting new developments that we'll be ready to roll out very soon.

James Blatch: Okay, yeah, so that does bring us neatly onto instaFreebie and that's the interview that we have today because it's one platform that stands out really above the others in this area, which is sort of this cooperative pushes. We dealt with insta-freebie quite a bit and in a moment, we're going to hear from Ashley.

But I have to say if you don't use instaFreebie, if you haven't been part of these pushes before I don't really fundamentally understand what it is and what I would be supposed to do as an author. So just for the dummies among us can you start by explaining that?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, so instaFreebie is a new service. It's been around, I say new, it's probably been around for about a year now.

What it does is enable authors to make their free offers known to potential new subscribers and it also enables the transfer of those free books to the devices of their readers in a fairly seamless fashion. When it came along I was hearing reports of how effective it was.

I'm a skeptical old git and my initial reaction was this is too good to be true because I was hearing some amazing numbers of authors adding 1,000 subscribers in a week and when something sounds too good to be true my default is it's almost certainly going to be too good to be true but the more I looked into it, the more I realized that it's not like that at all. It's very

effective, it's legitimate, it's completely ethical. It's based on collaboration and cooperation and it's working really really well.

There are two ways that you can take advantage of instaFreebie and we'll get into a bit more of that in the actual interview but the first way is for you as an author to put up your book on instaFreebie and then to rely on them doing some pushes to their mailing list, because they've got a big mailing list of interested readers that they will advertise for you and that will mean that you'll get some subscribers, and you can also do some pushing of that yourself. You have a landing page that instaFreebie will give you and then you can push that out across your social channels, you can put it on Twitter, Facebook, and if you tag instaFreebie and they notice that you're pushing that deal, they may reciprocate with pushing it a bit harder to their list at the same time.

That's the kind of base level that's available to everybody. The way to supercharge that is for a number of authors to get together and this combines instaFreebie and newsletter swaps. Let's just say we could find another eight espionage writers, so there's 10 of us all writing espionage thrillers. We would put a page together on someone's website where there'd be links to all of those free books, 10 free books.

All of the authors would then e-mail their mailing lists and utilize their social channels and send traffic to that landing page. Readers arriving at that page would have the option to download one or two or even all 10 of those books but what they would also need to do in order to get those books is to allow instaFreebie to take their e-mail address and pass it on to the author and also to themselves. InstaFreebie builds their own lists that way too.

It's that kind of push, especially when it's amplified by instaFreebie mailing out to its list on say a Friday, they'll have various deals going out throughout the week. You can add three figures, even four figures worth of subscribers in a really short time. It's really effective, it's very cheap, very

cost effective, it's one of the most exciting new platforms that I've come across in the last 18 months or so.

James Blatch: When you say it's very cheap, what sort of costs are we talking about?

Mark Dawson: I think it's, I have to double check, it's free for the first month. SPF students get a second month for free because we're working with instaFreebie on the launch of the last 101 course, and I think it's \$20 a month I think. Either 10 or \$20 a month going forward so it's not going to break the bank and if you're getting, say you even got 100 subscribers for that \$20, that's better than you'll get anywhere else so it's really effective in terms of price.

James Blatch: If you end up getting near four figures, or even four figures, you're talking about such a minuscule amount for potentially valuable, well yeah valuable leads.

Mark Dawson: Yeah and if you're selling a book later on to that list and the book is say \$5 and you sell 10 copies, you've already got a return of estimate of about two and a half, 250% so it's really very effective.

James Blatch: Yeah. Okay. Look, shall we hear from Ashley at instaFreebie. This is an interview that you've carried out, a rare foray into interviewing. I shall be listening with a critical ear and we'll come back after that.

Mark Dawson: I'm joined this afternoon by Ashley Dera from instaFreebie. InstaFreebie is a company that I've been aware of for a good year or so I should think and I'll be completely honest up front. I think I may have mentioned this to Ashley before but when instaFreebie came on the scene, the reports from authors about how effective it was were so positive, I almost thought it was too good to be true.

But the more I looked into it, the more I realized that it's a really great company, very author centric, enabling authors to hook up with readers and it's just worked wonders for the authors that it's worked for in the short time that it's been around, so welcome Ashley to the SPF podcast. How are you?

Ashley: Thanks so much. I'm really good. It's early here in Boston but I'm looking forward to the day. It's going to be good.

Mark Dawson: Boston is Indie author HQ with you guys and BookBub both in the same town so that's a nice place to visit. If we could get started Ashley, just perhaps if you could tell us a little bit about you and then also give us a bit of history about instaFreebie.

Ashley: Sure. I've been at instaFreebie for a little over two years now and I started out doing a lot of our production and operations activities but I've moved on to working on our business development and really helping to build partnerships and collaborations with authors.

In the beginning of the company when I was here, we actually started out with a different product. We had both the Mid List and the instaFreebie but we quickly figured out that instaFreebie had vastly more opportunity to help all authors, no matter if they were just starting out or if they were more established. So we started to run with that more and more and just realized there was much more potential to collaborate with authors and support a lot more authors too, so that's been a really exciting journey. It's been a lot of fun to work with so many authors.

Mark Dawson: For those of you who don't know, Mid List was a company kind of much like BookBub on a slightly smaller scale whereby there's a list of readers where you would then mail out on a regular basis about deals that authors might have on their books.

Ashley: Right.

Mark Dawson: Okay, so instaFreebie has been the focus then since, pretty much since you've got on board. The thing that James said to me before, when we chatted about this yesterday was he couldn't get his head around what instaFreebie actually does, what it offers authors.

Could you set that out for us?

Ashley: Yes I can. It may sound ambiguous but hopefully it does help clear things up. What we've come to find at instaFreebie that it's not a utility, it's really about a community of authors and readers coming together to collaborate and work together in order to connect with one another. We help authors connect directly with readers and to be able to communicate directly with readers. We love to give that to authors and to help you to do that.

Then, we have authors working together with other authors and actually supporting each other, helping to give tips so that they can be more successful and even working together on group promotions. There's really a community on both sides and then we work with everybody, continue to help to promote them and boost their work as well.

Mark Dawson: It's fairly obvious you've kind of got your foot in two camps. You've got a community of authors on the one hand and then a larger community of readers on the other hand and you're just facilitating links between those two groups.

Ashley: Right, so a more simplified version of what I just said is that we help authors reach new readers and reach the right readers that are going to want to connect with them and really help authors to grow their mailing lists.

Mark Dawson: Okay, so on the readers' side, rough numbers if you're able to give them, how many readers are using instaFreebie on a regular basis?

Ashley: We have about 450,000 readers or more. The list is always growing.

Mark Dawson: Okay, and one of the things we're going to get to is collaboration and one of the cool things about how your business model works is that you're constantly growing your list and also growing the lists of authors and the more that authors send traffic to instaFreebie so that readers can get free books, you also grow your list at the same time which is a virtuous circle because the next time the author runs a deal the list will be bigger, is that right?

Ashley: Right. That's totally right and it benefits authors to continuously engage their readers, even if maybe they have one reader. They're just starting out and they have one reader, and they keep reengaging that one reader, we're going to reward you for that because you're trying and maybe that's all that you're able to do at the moment but you're trying so we're going to help you. Most people I would say have more than one reader but you know it's just a scenario.

Mark Dawson: Okay. Let me put myself in James' shoes. James is working on his first book. I'm obviously a bit further down the track than James is. James is ready to go and he's looking now to build his mailing list because he understands how important it is to do that.

If I came to instaFreebie and said, "I've got one book," what would you recommend that I did with it?

Ashley: I know if you've got one book I know it's kind of scary to give that away for free, so I would suggest to make it a little less daunting that you could do a preview. You could do the first chapter or a couple of chapters. It's going to depend on the length of your book and you can offer that as a sneak peek or an exclusive sneak peek to readers to introduce them to you and to the kind of work that you're writing.

That's a really great way to introduce yourself to a reader and let them try it out so they can see if they like it, rather than possibly building any negativity and they're like, "Oh I paid for this but I don't actually like it." Whereas they're like, "Oh well maybe this wasn't for me, okay I'm going to move on," and then you have somebody else come along who reads it and they're like, "Oh I really like this, I want to read more, I'm going to go buy this book now or I'm going to go review it." Maybe you give it out as an ARC instead, an advanced reader copy.

Mark Dawson: Let's say James has set up his account, he's uploaded, he's going to give the whole book away because James has been listening to me for long enough, he's drunk the kool aid, he knows that mailing lists are important.

So if that books is now available, what would the next step be? We've got our account, we've uploaded the files to instaFreebie service, what's the next step?

Ashley: Awesome, so the next step is to create your giveaway campaign and I want to give a note first before I describe that process a little bit more.

When you're creating a giveaway campaign it's the link that you're going to share with readers so they can become introduced to your content and then you can hopefully gain them as a subscriber or you can get reviews or feedback from them, whatever your goal is.

There's a big secret and I want authors to know about it and the thing is that with the giveaway campaigns you should make it shareable. If you make your giveaway shareable it's going to be a lot easier for readers once they've claimed your book to then share it on social media with other readers, other authors, friends, family, so it's going to help to extend your reach.

It also lets us know that you're giving us permission to share it as well. If you don't mark it as shareable we're going to be like, "Okay for whatever reason, the author doesn't want us to share it, we're going to respect that and we're going to let them do their thing."

Make your campaigns shareable. You can even go a step further and make it public so that it's also searchable on the web on a broader sense. That's just going to expand the reach.

Mark Dawson: Okay, so there's a couple of good tips. Make sure that you're increasing the chances of virality and easy sharing just with ticking the boxes on the inside of instaFreebie. Let's assume that we've done that. What is then the next step? How do we start to drive traffic to our offer and to our giveaway?

Ashley: Before we go there, there are a few other things on that giveaway page. Those I would say are really important and then you're able to control how many you give away.

There's an expiration date, you can say if it's exclusive, so those are also important. Once you've got that all set up now it's time to share and I found that some of these tactics are intuitive to me but not necessarily to everybody so when you're ready to share, if you have no audience to a small audience my biggest tip in the beginning even if it's small or if it's starting out with family and friends, start engaging with the people if you have, that are your current fans, engage them first, and I say that because it's important to remember the people that are your first fans because they can be your biggest fans.

A lot of people there's so much activity going on in the media nad just everywhere in the world, people like to know things first and want to be the discovers of the next cool thing. The more that you can appreciate and reward your current fans, you're going to be able to make them your super fans and they're going to help push you out to other people.

It's really important not to forget about them in the beginning. Focusing on that. If you don't have an audience there are ways where you can include your instaFreebie giveaway as some authors have said they've done this, putting them in the back matter of other content that you might have on a storefront or putting it on your website so it's easily accessible for readers to find.

Sharing it with bloggers, I mean like, "Hey I'm giving away this full book, it's an advanced reader copy, I want to know if you're interested in reading it." There are a lot of bloggers out there and they're always looking for content to read so take a risk and share it with them and see what happens because you never know.

If you have zero to a small audience, these are a few great ways to get your work out there. As we start to see that you're engaging people, we're also going to engage people with you so that we can continue to boost your success and maximize your campaign alongside you.

Mark Dawson: How do you notice that?

Ashley: We have internal tracking so that we're able to do that. It makes it real easy for us and it's really helpful. We do also look at our social media. A lot of authors will tag hashtag instaFreebie or at instaFreebie on different social media accounts and that's just another way to show us that other activity is happening in addition to our internal tracking.

Mark Dawson: That makes a lot of sense. One of the other things that I found that's quite cool with instaFreebie, because I've got a book up, 1000 Yards is the first, kind of my perma free John Milton book and it's been there for a little while. If people download another book they'll be presented at the end of that transaction with, almost like Amazon also boughts, so it's like if you like this, you might like this.

Quite often my book is clearly appearing in those also bought without doing any kind of promotion, no kind of push on my part. I'm getting two or three subscribers a day at the moment, which is over the course of a year you're looking at 500 or 600 and that's pretty significant for something that is not expensive and is minimal effort on my part. That's really good. I should probably just mention cost. I mean this isn't free but it's not particularly expensive. The first month is free I think and then is it \$20 a month?

Ashley: Yup. It's \$20 a month to share your content, be in control of your giveaway campaigns and gain subscribers.

Mark Dawson: Okay. Not hugely expensive. When you start breaking down how much that those subscribers cost it's competitive with any other method of acquisition that I'm using at the moment. That includes things like Facebook ads so really effective in terms of cost per acquisition. A couple more things that we want to talk about before we wrap this up. The author collaboration and that kind of sense of working together is really important to the instaFreebie ethos. I wondered if you could just tell us a little bit about how you see that working best in practice?

Ashley: Yeah. We kind of came to that conclusion. We'd always been doing it but we hadn't really realized it until I guess several months ago that wow this is a really powerful thing and we really need to keep focusing on it. It came out of really wanting to help and support authors in a new way and to reward them for engaging with readers. So if we're able to work together with authors and collaborate with them, it furthers that idea and this mentality that we're working together, we're in this together, so if we can help you to be successful than we're also going to be successful. We've continued practice with this mindset and it's come out as you share and we share.

As all authors are sharing their giveaway campaigns, whether their doing it individually themselves or they're doing it in groups or they're doing it in

other innovative ways that I hadn't thought of yet, we're going to support all authors so as you're sharing and engaging with readers and you're doing it consistently we're also going to do it consistently with you. It's all about rewarding and working together so that everyone can be successful together.

Mark Dawson: Okay, so a really effective way that I've seen this happen, this is kind of what we also want to just talk about as we bring this to a close is a very effective way of making this work more efficiently is for one of the authors, or an author, to say to maybe nine other authors in their genre. So let's say that I'm doing sci-fi and I say to nine other sci-fi authors that I know, "I've got an instaFreebie giveaway, would you like to also put a book up. I'll host a page on my website where all of those covers will be available and readers will be able to click on those images and they'll then go through to instaFreebie where they can then download their free book." The real juice from that is when all of the authors agree that they'll share that page with their list. If I've got 1,000 people on my list, obviously that's a great start but if my other nine collaborators also have 1,000, suddenly I'm 10 timesing my reach to readers who are more likely to like the kinds of books that I'm writing. That can work really really effectively, can't it?

Ashley: Yes, totally. A lot of authors have been doing it and it's been hugely successful for a lot of them. We even have authors, several authors that consistently do these group giveaways with other authors. It's a great opportunity to work together, to get to know each other, yeah it's great.

Mark Dawson: Really effective. I've heard authors adding literally four figures worth of new subscribers over the course of a couple of weeks which is really fantastic, at a very very low price.

One of the facets of that is that someone has got to do the work of hosting the page, building it, collecting the images, all of that kind of stuff, finding the other authors who you might be interested. One of the things that we

knew that we wanted to do when we started looking at the 101 course and obviously there's quite a bit on instaFreebie in that course.

One of the things that we wanted to do is take some of that effort away from authors so we are in the process, really quite soon, possibly even when this podcast goes out, to put live a website where we will host, where we will gather books together, we will put those books up and then authors will be able to send that link to their list and hopefully we'll get some reciprocal love from you guys at instaFreebie to really and try to push the people working that, getting some good subscribers for their list.

Ashley: Yeah, absolutely. I'm really excited about it. When you started talking about this idea I thought it was really great and would just further bring the Indie author community and the self-publishing community together to be more successful so I'm really excited about it.

Mark Dawson: Cool. One of the other things we're going to do is we're going to set up individual Facebook groups per genre so there will be a sci-fi, fantasy, mystery, thriller, romance, erotica, and each of those groups will have a captain. We're going to call them captains and they will enable or they will help people get together, put those primers together and we'll then take care of the slightly more irritating hosting and all that kind of stuff. We'll have details on that possibly in a week or so but we're quite close to being ready to put that live now so we're really excited to work with you guys and get that going.

Ashley: Yeah me too. That's really awesome. I'm excited and I like the idea of calling them captains for each of their different genres. That's really fun.

Mark Dawson: Cool. Okay Ashley, thanks very much. I know it's early for you in Boston right now so thanks very much for coming in early and this has been a really great useful chat for listeners today.

Ashley: Of course, yeah, I hope that all authors find some value in this.

James Blatch: There he is, the inquisitive general, Mark Dawson in a new career as an interviewer. How did that feel?

Mark Dawson: It felt fresh and invigorating.

James Blatch: Good.

Mark Dawson: I don't think we need you anymore James. This is Mark Dawson signing off, we'll forget about that.

James Blatch: Fresh and invigorating, it sounds like a shower gel but anyway.

Mark Dawson: It does.

James Blatch: You can write some copy, there's a career left for you. Look, we got to in our last 10 minutes, we're covering this area, so instaFreebie obviously is a big platform, it's low cost, we heard all the details there. That's great and I'm already excited about the prospect of being involved in that in the future.

We've also, SPF got a bit of a head start. As you say you latched on once you started seeing the results of instaFreebie, reached out to them. We have a really positive relationship with them so if you're inside the SPF community you will find easier and more manageable ways to be a part of instaFreebie and we're building a platform using our community that means you'll get the very most out of your time with them so stay tuned for that and we'll reveal and send out some of the details of those genre groups and SPF instaFreebie groups in time.

Okay, so we talked about newsletter swaps.

What else can people do in terms of getting their name out there and getting mailing lists without spending too much money, without going down the paid advertising roots?

Mark Dawson: It's all just going to be a question of keeping our eyes up for opportunities really because things will come along all the time. This isn't going to be something that everyone can do but I've had a few times, I mean some of it has come through from my survey results, one of the questions I ask is where did you hear about me, where did you join my list? I've had quite a few people who heard me on the radio doing interviews, I've had people reading articles I've done in the mainstream press. Other people there's a bit of crossing the streams here. People who came across me through SPF who then decided that they'd like to read my stuff and joined the list and are enjoying my fiction as well so that's very flattering. There's loads of ways that you can find people but the one thing that I want people to take away from this mini-series that we've done is just to be open to asking people to join and don't see it as imposing yourself on other people. See it as offering them a valuable opportunity.

You're giving them the chance to get a few hours of entertainment at no cost whatsoever so it's quite hard when you look at it that way, to see it as them doing you a favor. It's really the other way around. That's the way that you need to look at it and it will make it much easier to put those questions out there if you see it that way rather than in a negative fashion.

James Blatch: Yeah, and we talked in the first episode about some of the basic things you can do for completely free and I've been following some of those up, even after that first week, so going on to the forums that talk about vintage jets and cold war aircraft and picked up a couple of, for me, very valuable looking advanced readers. People who were there who flew the jet or maintained them in the 60s and are going to be able to pick up on the things that I got wrong in the book. That's going to be useful for me. At the same time of course hopefully recruiting some fans for my fiction in the future.

Good, okay, well look that's been our mini-course on mailing lists. We have really focused over these three episodes on the broad approaches for how you build up your mailing list. We can't underline how important it is to have a strong and healthy list, an active list.

There's lots of other aspects to this as hygiene of your list, a nice expression I know you use Mark, making sure your pruning it, you're making sure that the dead wood gets cleared out. But it's a lively and active list and not clogging up with people who aren't responding and there's a whole area of how often you should talk to your list, what sort of things you should say, how you should compartmentalize it which you can do under Mail Chimp or perhaps more easily under some of the other programs but we're going to save those for another day.

We do the odd webinar on these subjects but I hope people have enjoyed this. I certainly have from my point of view. I think it's been eye opening. We've seen the figures on our downloads have really spiked over these last couple of episodes, people have enjoyed hearing the nuts and bolts and practical advice on how to get their careers going in this area so that's a message to you and me, Mark, that people like this sort of thing.

That we need to work, it takes more effort from our point of view than just have somebody on an interview them and what's so long we put the effort in beforehand in planning the episodes but that's no bad thing. That's something you and I should be doing I think in the future. Certainly that video episode is coming up shortly so we'll do that.

Mark Dawson: Yup, absolutely. I hope people have enjoyed those. It's very nice to see people downloading in big numbers so we'll do more of this in the future.

James Blatch: Okay, now we may even be, we keep playing around with our format here. Basically the podcast comes out every week and you can hear it and if you go onto YouTube you can watch it. We are always working

on how we're going to do this, what's the best workflow for us and so on and gives the best quality and what we're going to try for the next couple of months is we're going to get ourselves together in the same room and we're going to record a couple of podcasts at the same time but this will be in higher quality sound and vision so both whether you listen or you go to YouTube to watch, hopefully from next week it'll be live from Salisbury, well not live.

Mark Dawson: In this room, this very room.

James Blatch: That very room, with your books in the background. I'm going to print out my book and blue tack it to the wall.

Mark Dawson: Yeah I've got space for it somewhere.

James Blatch: Yeah. Good. Look, thanks for much indeed Mark, I'll see you at the weekend or Sunday night or Monday morning for our next session down in Salisbury. Thank you very much indeed for listening. Hope you've enjoyed the mailing list episodes, we will be back next Friday. Have a good week of writing, have a good week of selling.

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