

EPISODE 59: TOP BOOK LAUNCH TIPS – WITH TIM GRAHL

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 and welcome to the Self-Publishing Formula Podcast with James Blatch and Mark Dawson.

This week we have a guest who's going to talk about launching in particular, and he's a bit of a name in the indie industry, and he also appears on a rival podcast, not really a rival podcast but an alternative podcast in our space and one that I like listening to because it's about writing a book. Tim is in the process of writing a book with Shawn Coyne.

Mark Dawson: Tim?

James Blatch: Did I say Tim? What did I say?

Mark Dawson: You said Tim. Tim Grahl.

James Blatch: Tim Grahl, yes.

Mark Dawson: We haven't announced his name.

James Blatch: Oh yes, Tim Grahl. Yes, who is Tim? Tim Grahl is going to be the guest. Good spot.

Mark Dawson: Thank you very much.

James Blatch: Next time I'll introduce you first and then me, because you always seem to know more about what's going on.

Tim is on a podcast with Shawn Coyne, who is, of course, the author of *The Story Grid*, a book I've referenced a couple of times and it's a bit of my go-to book at the moment. And he's going through this process with Tim, it's a fascinating listen.

It's hard work for Tim and I'm doing a very similar thing with my editor. I like the process he's going through. So each chapter, each scene, as Shawn calls them, comes back. And Tim's been here, he mentions this in an interview, in some of the scenes, he's had to write them three or four times until Shawn is happy, that they mean something, they're purposeful, and they have a role in the book.

I've actually contacted my editor a while ago because I'm writing my first book and learning the craft, this is how I'd like to work with her. Chapter by chapter. She's a bit reticent about that because her view is, well the book's got to flow from beginning to end and she wants to be able to take a broad view of it. But she's willingly gone along with it.

I've just got the feedback back from a second time rewritten, first chapter, and moving on from there. The chapter's gone from, I think it was about 12,000 words to 29,000 words now. So significantly different chapter.

Mark Dawson: 29,000 word chapter?

James Blatch: Yeah, it's a big chapter. Well, it's a part, really.

Mark Dawson: By days, yes.

James Blatch: My book is in days of the week, so there's times within that which, effectively, are mini chapters within it.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, yeah.

James Blatch: But I think it's a good way, really, at the beginning of your career, if you can get an editor and do this and say to them, "Let's work together as I write this book," it's rather an odd way of thinking about it, to write an entire book, 90,000 words or whatever it is, then hand it over, only for them to say, "Well that doesn't really work here, here, and here."

Mark Dawson: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Blatch: Why not do it as you go along and then learn through that process, and then, ultimately, you've got a finished book that then could go, for instance, to a new editor. And I know this is an expensive way of doing it, the way I look at it is an investment in my future, my career, like taking a college course. A lot cheaper than becoming a doctor or a lawyer.

We'll see how it goes from there. Anyway, that's not really what we've got Tim on, because Tim is becoming a bit of an expert in launching strategies. He's a digital guy. Digital marketing guy. Really nice and interesting guy to talk to, so we thought it'd be useful to have him along for that.

Mark Dawson: I first came across Tim, I'm guessing three or four years ago, when he was doing promotion for his book, which I can't remember the name of now, which is terribly bad of me. But that will be in the show notes. "Your First Thousand Copies," I think? Something along those lines.

He was on, probably on Joanna Penn's podcast, and I immediately was drawn to him. He's very open, he's got a very nice voice.

James Blatch: He talks very clearly. He's got a nice beard, as well.

Mark Dawson: He does have a very nice beard. And he speaks a lot of sense. So until recently, I think he may have stopped this now, but he had a [podcast about book launching](#) as well, which was very interesting.

He breaks it down really well and I've learned plenty from Tim. I thought it would be good to have him on to talk about launching, especially because it wasn't that long ago that I launched the new Milton book, and I'll have another launch not too far away from now.

And it's great to bring in people and try and learn, even if they're small little tweaks, that might mean an extra twenty copies sold. If you can get ten of those tweaks, that's two hundred copies, and that could be the difference between a very good launch and an extremely good launch. Really good to get him on. Kudos to you, I know it was difficult one in terms of quality, it was a lot of work, but it sounds really good now. It's really excellent interview and I think one that listeners will get a lot out of.

James Blatch: Okay, let's hear from Tim.

Tim Grahl: For the last eight years, I've been working with authors, helping them build their online platform, connect with readers, and sell more books. Worked with hundreds of different authors across all genres, indie, traditional publishing fiction, nonfiction. Launched a lot of books, several dozen bestsellers, a couple #1 New York Times Bestsellers.

And done a lot of the behind-the-scenes online marketing, platform-building for a lot of well-known authors. And then in the past almost two years, I've transitioned more to teaching online, before it was like 80% client work, 20% teaching, and now that's kind of switched around.

Then along with that, for about the past year and a half, I've been doing a podcast with Shawn Coyne of [Story Grid](#), where he's teaching me how to write fiction.

Each week, we do an episode where we just talk about how to write fiction, and he's helping me write a book. So those are the two main things I'm doing right now. Wish I had a better pitch than that.

James Blatch: It was a long elevator ride. We know that you're a busy man, and there's a congruence, I think, in our podcast, because Mark's an experienced writer and a very experienced marketer. He's one of the guys who's really cracked the marketing side as well and thinks a lot about that. We'll talk about that, obviously because that's your area as well, in a moment.

And I'm the newbie writer who's learning. And funnily enough, in fact I've probably got it here, I never have it very far away, is my copy of The Story Grid, do you see all my notes and marks?

Tim Grahl: Oh yeah.

James Blatch: I see you've got one close as well.

Tim Grahl: Yeah, I've got mine too.

James Blatch: And it's funny how many people use it. It's a fantastic book. I guess you read a book like that, and Shawn is direct in the way he teaches and he writes, and I love the way he sort of says you can not understand how this process works and do it differently if you want. Good luck with that. It won't work. This is what you need to do.

And that's what I need. It makes sense. There's a way stories work, right? There's a way stories work. Now you can go offbeat and you can do things very differently but you've got to understand from the beginning, and that's what I, I think a lot of people have come into contact with you through that process, through that podcast, and Shawn's world. We are going to talk about marketing, I promise, but from the story point of view, I'm interested to know about your journey.

Is it all making sense to you now, Shawn rubbing off?

Tim Grahl: It's coming together. It's been a really hard process to enter into for a couple of different reasons. The first is when we started doing this, I was already an expert at something. At book marketing and book launches, I already knew how to do that, and so for several years, I felt very comfortable talking about it and would be on podcasts to talk about it and wrote a couple books on it. Very comfortable, felt like an expert.

And so moving into just a complete beginner mindset again, and then the way that we are doing it is recording our conversations live, and we never discuss anything before we do the episode.

When he critiques my scenes, that's the first I've heard. It's pretty hard to hear that stuff, and then also knowing that it's going to go out and thousands of people are going to hear him rip apart my scenes. It's been emotionally challenging, just to enter into something as a complete newbie, and do it in a way where, a lot of times when you're new at something, you hide from experts, you know? Because you know it's bad, so you're not ready to hear what they have to say. I can't do that with Shawn, and then knowing that it's going out into the world, and it's not good, is hard.

But it's starting to come together. I'm starting to understand the flow of stories. Every year, my wife and I have the Christmas movies we watch. We were watching *The Family Man*, the Nicolas Cage movie from fifteen years ago, we watched that this weekend. And as the story is unfolding, I'm ticking off all the scenes and the terms and everything that has to happen in every story. And so I'm starting to see it out in the world, which means I'm starting to write it into my story as well. I've been working on this book since the beginning of the year, and he's only approved eleven scenes and I've written over a hundred.

I had just told my friend about a month ago, "Hey, Shawn's finally letting me not just write one scene at a time, but like three scenes at a time." And then

the next episode we recorded, he made me stop writing, and I wasn't allowed to write for like three weeks until we figured something else out. It's definitely a series of ups and downs, but it's been a really good process and it's been a very cathartic, is the word I'm looking for, to do it in the systematic public way.

We've just gotten so much feedback. I get emails weekly from people who are like, "You ask all the questions I'm afraid to ask," or "When you said that, man, I think that all the time." And so I feel like it's been really good for writers listening to it to realize they're not alone and to realize you're not the only one thinking these questions you think are stupid.

We're almost a year and a half in and we'll just keep going until the book's done, I guess.

James Blatch: It's a process that gets more difficult as it goes on for me. I think writing badly is easy, and writing mediocre is quite hard, and writing good is really hard.

I mean, who knew that writing a book was difficult? Presumably, everyone would be writing books if it was easy. But I'm a bit like you in terms of the process and I've had my editorial feedback, and I kind of knew half of what she was going to say, I knew in the back of my mind. The other half was illuminating and put me in the right direction and now I'm writing much more slowly than I used to as well.

I used to rattle out words really quickly, but now every sentence I'm thinking, "Does it work? Why am I writing this, where are we going?" And it's slowed me up.

Tim Grahl: Yeah.

James Blatch: I don't know about you, I'm still really enjoying it, but I find it harder and more difficult to plan my sessions of writing. Before, I'd dive in and write.

Now I need to know I've got two hours to sit and do it in a row. I can't just do ten minutes, which I used to be able to do.

Tim Grahl: I don't know if I've figured out a rhythm yet. Because the thing that's different about this, is that we record every week. And so my pacing is set off of the podcast more than the work I can get done.

Because some weeks he'll give me stuff to do, and it'll only take me an hour, but I don't get his feedback for a week. So my pacing's a little weird, and I'll stop writing for three weeks when we're figuring something out and he hasn't kind of released me to write yet. So that's been a little weird.

James Blatch: It's great to hear that, because one of the things that all of us face is that challenge of getting the stuff done and making progress, and although you say it's a bit weird some weeks when you don't do very much, on the other hand, there are weeks where you've got to do it.

You can't turn up to the podcast without it done, right?

Tim Grahl: Right, exactly. It is kind of a fire behind me, to get me going and sit down and write, because I know I need to turn in these three scenes so he has time to look over them before we do the podcast.

We talked about this at one point in one of the shows, but I think what has helped me progress so fast compared to a lot of writers is the short feedback loop.

If you read a book like Cal Newport's "[So Good They Can't Ignore You](#)" or you look at Anderson, something he wrote, it was the research that Malcolm Gladwell based his book "[Outliers](#)" on, it talks about deliberate

practice and how important deliberate practice is to learning something. And one of the hallmarks of deliberate practice is what they call short feedback loops.

The problem with a lot of writing is somebody will sit down and churn out an 80,000 word manuscript before anybody ever sees it. So they've worked on this thing for months and months, and then they get feedback.

That causes two problems: one is that means whatever mistakes you're making, you've made it over the course of 80,000 words instead of one scene, 1500 words or something. And it's too much feedback to give somebody at once, to be like, "Your entire book is a disaster."

I think what has helped me is I write 1500 words, I turn it in, he critiques it, I go back, I write 1500 words, he critiques it, and it just shortens this feedback loop. There was one point I wrote one scene five times before he approved it, but each time it got better and I fixed new things. So then those were all mistakes I won't make in future scenes.

Where if you're making those mistakes in scenes, like you're not turning a scene, and you write 60 scenes and 53 of them don't turn, that's a disaster. But if I just write one scene that doesn't turn, he's like "You gotta make this turn," and I go back and make it turn, he's like "Well, it turned, but you didn't do the middle build good enough," and so I go back and fix that. And then I'm learning in this shorter loop than most writers learn, which is over months and months.

James Blatch: With the way you spell it out makes complete sense for the way that editors should work with writers. I mean in almost every other field of instruction that's how it works.

When you learn to fly, you don't go off by yourself for a month with a plane then come back and the instructor starts to take you through what you did a month ago. You would all be dead.

Tim Grahl: And writing's different than other creative work. If you compare it to music, if you're learning an instrument, you know immediately when you play a note wrong. You know immediately when you miss a beat on the drums. It's a pretty quick feedback loop, even without a teacher.

And the problem with writing is you don't have that immediate feedback loop. You can sit in your room and keep making the mistake over and over and over and it's really hard to see on your own. So that's what I think has made such a big difference.

Because if you go back to fall of 2015, I forgot exactly what episode it was, probably around 10 or 12, and you read my first scene I ever turned in to him, and then you compare it to the scenes I'm writing now, it's night and day difference. They're just legitimately better. They're not the best-written thing out there, but the amount of progress I've made in a year is really strong.

James Blatch: I wonder how many editors will start offering their service and caveating it in that way? I've got my editors basically do that, having sort of fed off Shawn and yourself, and also in my initial conversation with her, which was an hour long and going over the whole book.

Now we're in a position where I'll do a chapter and send it to her and we talk about it and then I move on. Not quite scene by scene. It was her suggestion to start off with, and it's worked so much better. But that seems to me, as an editor, a service they should offer from the beginning rather than your \$700 check at the end for doing it, but say to somebody, I have \$700, but pay me \$30 a session for two years, whatever, let's work together on the books.

I don't know how many editors offer that service. It's the way Shawn works with people, I know.

Tim Grahl: It's interesting because I don't know. I never have worked in the publishing industry, I've never worked with an editor outside of getting my nonfiction book edited. From what I understand, the process is the author writes this book and tries to get an agent, and if that doesn't work maybe they try to get an editor to help them rework the book.

But again, you're trying to rework this giant tome instead of just a little bit. And I think a lot of authors have done this with short stories and submitting short stories and working on them that way.

I had done a couple **NaNoWriMos**, but besides that, I had never tried to write fiction before me and Shawn started together, so I don't know what the normal way is.

James Blatch: I think it's at the end of the book, you get an editor, and you rewrite and you rewrite and so on. But anyway, it is changing, and Shawn and yourself are helping that.

Let's talk about marketing, because that's principally what we talk about on the SPF Podcast, although there is quite a lot of writing elements into it. I know that you're transitioning from coaching individual writers through to online instruction and so on. And I've seen this quite a few weeks ago, I was looking through your YouTube stuff and videos. It's quite a lot of you teaching live audiences. They look really gripping, anyway, the way you were talking to them.

Was that just for the video, or if you do these live sessions with writers?

Tim Grahl: No, I did a creative live segment. I think that's probably what you came across. I still do one on one consulting, it's just not as much as I used to. I'm basically working with authors over longer periods of time instead of just kind of helping them one-off. Just working with them to figure out how to leverage their platform to launch their books, mainly.

James Blatch: Okay, so what are the sort of things, though?

In what state are authors coming to you in? And in terms of how you are then packaging up your teaching which is going to go to a non-specific audience, a wide audience, what are the key things you're starting with?

Tim Grahl: What I always start with is looking at what assets the author currently has, and that will help me determine the kind of advice I give. If you're an author that comes to me with an email list of 100,000 and your best friends with top podcasters, that's going to be a different type of launch than if you're like, "I finished my book, I started a blog but nobody reads it, what am I going to do?"

Those are two different types of advice and actually one is you're going after a bestseller list and the other is you're just playing the long game. But no matter what kind of launch you're doing, I always am looking at three things, which is how do you get fans to buy the book, how do you get fans to share the book, and how do you get influencers to help you promote the book?

The way that I define those two terms, I always try to start broad so we can think overarching strategy first before any kind of tactics. I just think fans are people that are going to buy a copy of your book, and influencers are people that are gonna get other people to buy a copy of your book. So they're influencing other people's buying decisions.

Your fans are people directly connected with you, so they're people following you on Facebook, Twitter, social media. They're people on your email list. They're the people that, when you say hey, I have a new book out, they're going to go buy a copy.

And then the other group is the influencers. It's like you or somebody else with a podcast or a blog or whatever. You have a following and you

influence other people's buying decisions, so getting you to promote my book will not just sell one copy, it's going to sell 50 copies or 100 or 1000 copies.

Then you just start working both of those sides of the equation. You're trying to make it really easy for fans to buy your book and give them a really good reason to buy it now.

And then you're working with influencers to make it in their best interest to help you promote the book, and there's a hundred different ways to do each of those. But I find that starting high-level and breaking it down into those two groups help you to kind of see, you're going to interact differently with those groups.

With your fans you're going to interact more in a one-to-many. You're going to send an email to your entire list. Where influencers, you're going to interact with them one-on-one. You're going to email with them directly, you're going to text them or whatever your relationship is.

And if you're lining everything up for one big launch, where you're trying to push a bunch of sales in the same week, you just plan everything out so that all those sales hit that first week.

James Blatch: And do you work in specific genres, or do people come to you across the board?

Tim Grahl: I've worked across the board. I've worked with a lot of indie fiction writers, so probably my most well-known is I worked with Hugh Howie through his Wool books and a couple of the others.

And then I've worked with Michael Bunker on the release of his books, and when people are like, "This stuff doesn't work for fiction," I'm like, "Well, I worked with a guy that writes Amish science fiction and if it works for Amish

science fiction, it will literally work for anything.” And as I helped him with his launch, he sold 50,000 copies of his book in the first six months.

A lot of my work has been in nonfiction, but I’ve worked across the board to help. 80% of the advice for fiction and nonfiction is exactly the same. Again, the biggest thing is identifying people that you’re connected to and giving them a really good reason to buy right now.

If we were talking specific strategies, one of the main things I look at is one of the biggest triggers to get people to buy is scarcity. So that’s why Macy’s is always running a sale. And it’s like, “Okay, well if you don’t buy by Friday, the price is gonna go up.”

It has to be scarcity of the price is gonna go up, or you’re not gonna be able to buy this product. When you do your product launches, the cart closes and it’s not available anymore and that’s what triggers people to buy.

The problem with books is, they are by definition around forever. Once you launch the book, they’re on Amazon. And you have to create scarcity around it.

Normally what I do is we put together some kind of bonus package, where it’s like if you buy the book by this date, I’m gonna give you these three other books, or I’m going to give you this workbook, or I’m going to give you these three downloads or this video series.

And basically look at how you can add value to the book and promise people that if they buy the book by such and such date, you’re gonna give them all of these extra bonuses. And so that creates that scarcity so that everybody will buy your book right now instead of putting it on their Amazon wishlist with the other 382 books they haven’t read yet.

That's what we're trying to do. And then we promote that bonus package to all of your fans. So your email list, your Facebook group, your Twitter followers, wherever you have a direct connection to your fan base, you promote your book and this bonus through those different avenues.

James Blatch: And are you teaching a lot of advertising? I know you're having a dip into a look through our Facebook ads course at the moment.

Is social media or paid advertising a big part of what you teach or do you use more organic advice?

Tim Grahl: I don't do very much on the Facebook advertising or other types of advertising. In most cases, most people are making roughly two bucks a book when they're selling their book. Especially when you're traditionally published, that's a rough number. So every book you sell, you're making \$2. It's really hard to make your ROI on paid advertising work when you're only making \$2 per conversion.

Now what I look at, I always have a long game approach. I want to build my email list, I'm sure you guys have talked about building email lists on this podcast before, so I'm not going to harp on that except to agree with other people that it's your number one asset.

My goal is before my book comes out, I'm building an email list. And then when I launch a book, I use that email list to launch the book and get it out into the world and promote it and sell a bunch of copies.

But then I keep building my email list. So the next time I come out with a book, my email list is going to be even bigger. And then the next time I come out with a book is gonna be even bigger.

When my first book came out, I had 1800 email subscribers. When my second book came out, I had 12,000. By the time my next one will come out, I'm going to have probably 60,000 people on my email list.

You want to just keep growing it so that over time, each launch becomes more and more successful just off of your direct platform that you own, the access to your fanbase. I do not like relying on advertising. I don't like relying on publicity. These are all things that you don't have control of. I like to own the access to my fans and I can download my email list and I can go somewhere else and email them somewhere else. Unless you own your list, your direct access to fans, you could lose it at any time.

Several years ago, Facebook made a big change to how they handled Pages, and all these people that had built these huge platforms on Facebook, overnight, lost huge access to those fans. That's because they built it on somebody else's property.

And so I'm always looking at the long-term game. I'm a writer, I'm not somebody that wrote a book once. I'm 35 years old, I've got a lot of writing left in me. I'm constantly looking at, how do I keep building my platform, how do I keep building my email list, keep growing what I'm doing? And then along the way I'm launching books as I write them and each one's going to be more successful than the last.

James Blatch: You can never talk enough about the mailing list being your key asset enough, really. I'm never gonna tire of making it clear to people. We often observe this fact that there are people in our community who think this is getting saturated, everybody's doing the same thing, but that's only because they're the same people as we are, listening to your podcasts.

There's a million other people out there who say, What's a mailing list?

Tim Grahl: Right, exactly.

James Blatch: So there's a lot of growth left in that.

Tim Grahl: I have a great article if people are struggling with how to get their mailing list set up. Just Google “[email marketing for authors](#)” and I have an article that will pop up that will walk you through, I have no idea what an email list is all the way to your first 100 subscribers.

James Blatch: That’s great, and TimGrahl.com is probably still your main home on the internet?

Tim Grahl: It’s actually changed to [BookLaunch.com](#).

James Blatch: Okay, BookLaunch.com.

Tim Grahl: It’s a little easier to spell

James Blatch: Everyone puts the L in the wrong place, I guess.

Let’s talk about nonfiction for a bit then, because we often get our “does this stuff work for nonfiction?” Joanna Penn famously said on this podcast, it’s so much easier with nonfiction because you have a lot of other avenues. You’ve got courses and live tuition and all the rest of it.

With fiction, you’re basically here in one place. Nonetheless, really, nonfiction has been your focus up until the whole Shawn Coyne thing, and that’s been an area you’ve had a lot of success with. Your book is well-read and well-regarded.

Did you discover this by yourself, all this stuff in the early days, or did you see somebody else doing something and thought, I could do that?

Tim Grahl: It started eight years ago. I was a freelance web developer. And this guy named Ramit Sethi was running this site, he still runs it, called [IWillTeachYouToBeRich.com](#).

He needed some technical help with the website. So I started working with him right around the time he got his book contract. I was doing a lot of the

nuts and bolts behind the scenes leading up to the book launch. I was kind of thinking during the book launch, it wouldn't do very well, because he was like 24 or something, and had no publicist, was not doing any traditional media, was not doing any of these things.

And then we launched his book, and with just his blog and email list, he put himself on the New York Times and Wall Street Journal lists in the first week. And I was like, well damn, how'd he pull that off?

I started working with some other authors and I started working with some authors like Dan Pink and Guy Kawasaki and Pamela Slim and Tim Sanders and Dan and Chip Heath and all these kind of big name authors. I would go to them and convince them to hire me, mainly so I could try out ideas with their platform.

James Blatch: How are you on the technical side, as a developer?

Tim Grahl: I would come to them and I would say hey, you should be building an email list. And they're like, "Okay, I don't know how to do that." I said, "Well, hire me to do that" and then all of a sudden, I would have an email list that was 40, 50, 60,000 people and I could try out all of my ideas to see if they actually worked.

I would get hired to do book or author marketing and I would come up with new ideas and start throwing them out there to see what would work and what wouldn't.

Because you could hear all of this advice, I cannot over emphasize the amount of bullshit advice that is on the Internet about social media marketing and building Facebook pages and all this complete shit that does not work. It doesn't work.

It works the way I can walk from the East Coast to the West Coast of America. I could. That's the worst way to travel, but I could get there eventually.

I was always looking for, what's the thing that will get me to put in 20% of the work and get 80% of the results? I want to find those levers.

One launch I had an email list of 50,000, a Twitter following of 1000. And I just tested it. I'm like how many books do we sell through Twitter and how many books do we sell through email, and lo and behold, an email subscriber during that launch was twelve times more likely to actually buy a book.

So now I can actually go out and say, Twitter is a complete waste of time. And again, a lot of people use these tools for the wrong thing. I believe things like Twitter and Facebook are more one-on-one tools. We try to treat them as mass communication and they're just not.

Because people ignore their Twitter feed. They basically dip into this fire hose. Where Twitter and Facebook can be good for one-on-one communication, directly connect with somebody you're trying to connect with.

So this stuff that I found, I would go out and I would ask people that I thought were smart. I'd read stuff online, I'd get ideas and I'd come back and I'd just try them.

What's different about what I was doing, and this is where typical advice on book marketing doesn't work, I'll read these books by these authors that are super well-meaning, because they're like, hey I did this thing and it worked really well for me.

And that's great it worked for you, but that doesn't mean that's a replicable thing. If I do that, it may not work. I read this one book on book marketing

one time, and I'm reading through and they're giving all this advice. I'm like I've done that, that doesn't sell very many books. I've done that, that doesn't sell many books. And then lo and behold, the thing that actually sold a lot of books for them is this big name blogger accidentally came across his book on Amazon, read it, loved it, wrote one blog post about it, and sold like 5,000 copies.

James Blatch: Right.

Tim Grahl: And I'm like, you can't replicate that. So why are you writing a book giving advice when 90% of the advice results in 10% of your sales? But people don't know the difference.

And so what I've done is I've worked one-on-one with hundreds of authors, trying this stuff over and over and over. I don't want something that's personality based, if someone's a big outgoing extrovert and they're a natural marketer, that's great for them and I'm glad it works. But that's not gonna work for most people. I don't want anything that's personality-based, I don't want anything that is a flash in the pan that will work for a short period of time and then go away. I want to figure out, what are the tried and true things, if I just do these two things every week over time, my success is just going to keep growing and growing and growing? That's where a lot of my advice comes from. Most of my advice is stop doing 90% of what you're doing and do like two things. And those will work over time.

Sorry, got on a rant there.

James Blatch: No, no, it was good. It was good. And it was interesting you mentioned the guy who actually, when you looked at it, all his sales came because he happened to get the interest of a big blogger. But actually that is something you teach as part of your strategy now, your influencers, which I think we talk about.

The list I think people are familiar with.

The influencers is one of those areas, reaching out to people like that, that some people find a bit of a hurdle, and quite difficult, but in that example, you can see it can be a very powerful thing.

Tim Grahl: Yes. Connecting with influencers is absolutely a great way to promote your book. What I was meaning in that thing, was that just happened. He didn't mean for that to happen.

James Blatch: I took the point, but it reminded me.

Tim Grahl: Yeah. Connecting with influencers can be overwhelming. There are a couple different things that I suggest for people just getting started. The first is to start with C-List people.

Everybody's trying to get Seth Godin to talk about their book, everybody's trying to get whoever. These big name people to talk about their book. I'm just making up numbers, but 95% of people are trying to get the A-listers to promote their stuff.

If you go down to that B-List or that C-List of people, authors that are finding some success but aren't these big well-known names, connect with those people. One, they have time. They're not being inundated because all the top A-listers are being inundated. They're much more likely to share what they're learning with you and want to connect with you because they remember what it's like to be hungry, because they're six months away from being hungry.

And what happens is, so there's not as much pressure to connect with them and you'll all grow at the same pace. What I've found is the people as my influencer ranking has grown over the years, the people I trust now are people I've known for a long time, that we knew each other when we both were nobodies. Now, I trust them and we work together on a lot of things.

Where these people that are coming straight to me, I don't know what their game is. And that's what I started doing, I just wanted to connect with anybody that was in my space and doing something interesting. And I just kind of got over that. Then if I fail, I'm not failing with Stephen King. I'm failing with a C-List author and I can just move on with my life.

The other thing if you're trying to start in doing influencer outreach is doing podcasts. I find when I started doing outreach, if I was doing a guest post, I'd get super nervous and put it off and never do it. Or god forbid if I got a speaking engagement somewhere, I just wouldn't eat for three weeks before I got up to speak.

Where podcasts are much easier because they're just like a conversation. I just started looking on iTunes for any interview-based podcast and I would say hey, I have this book, I'm the author of this book, I think your audience would really enjoy hearing me talk about it. Could you have me on?

And then I'd prepare nothing. I'd just show up and they'd ask me questions and I answer the questions. And so I do think it's extremely important to connect with influencers, but a lot of times, people hear the word influencer, and they're thinking like top tier influencers.

That's why I always come back to the definition. All the definition of an influencer is, they influence people's buying decisions. That could be five people. That could be fifty people, that could be a hundred people.

You just want somebody that influences other people's buying decisions and you can just start working with them and getting to know them. There are a hundred different ways you could do it, but most of the time when I was new and I was nervous and I was a nobody, I would just send emails to people, and just say hey, you know, could I be on your podcast or hey, I'd love to pick your brain for twenty minutes, would you mind jumping on Skype with me and I just have a couple questions?

If I'm starting with those people that are the B and C list people, they probably have time to talk to me.

James Blatch: Yeah, that's great.

Tim Grahl: So that's what I would recommend.

James Blatch: Even that, I think for some authors, even that can be a bit of a hurdle for them, sort of promoting themselves personally like that, but it's an important step.

Mark and I talk a lot about drawing a line, whether it's a lunchtime line in the day where you move from writer to businessman.

You've just got to think dispassionately about the product that you created in the morning, and how you're going to market it, and that's when it gets a little bit easier to reach out to people and say, let's talk about this.

Tim Grahl: Try to remember, you love writing, you love books. You love what you're doing. The person you're trying to reach out to loves the exact same things as you. You're just connecting with somebody else that likes the same things as you.

When I do the influencer side of things, I'm not thinking overly strategic or if I can just get this one person. I'm wondering who can I connect with that we're into the same stuff? And that's what I do early on when I would go to conferences and stuff, I just wanted to connect with people that were doing similar stuff to me. That's it.

And we'd go get a coffee, we'd go get a beer, we'd hang out. I'm not pitching them on anything. I'm just getting to know them. Because again, I have the long game view. If I can connect with somebody, they're going to

help me for the next thirty years. I don't need to ask them to do anything today. I've got time for that. I just want to get to know them.

And again, you're just making friends. Don't overthink this thing. You're just connecting with other people that are doing interesting things like you. And yes, it's nerve wracking and yes you're gonna fail, and yes people are going to say no, and all that kind of stuff.

But if your writing sucks and then it gets better and sucks and then it gets better. It's just like everything else where it's just like you'll learn how to do it and you'll become more of a natural. And then you'll get to this point where it's like people start coming to you and it's a whole lot easier.

James Blatch: Tim that's been brilliant. The time has whipped past. We've ratcheted up forty minutes on the clock, which is where we're roughly trying to make our interviews work.

You are in Tennessee, is that right?

Tim Grahl: Yeah, that's right. Nashville.

James Blatch: You're in Nashville, okay, you should have a guitar in your hands, what is a book? Do you play guitar? Is that compulsory in Nashville?

Tim Grahl: I used to. I'm starting to feel the itch again. We'll see what happens.

James Blatch: Tim, Brilliant. I would love to talk to you again, because we barely scraped the surface really, and it was a value-packed interview, so I really thank you for that and all the tips.

Tim Grahl: Yeah, thanks for having me.

James Blatch: Just tell us again where people can go to find out a little bit more about what you teach?

Tim Grahl: The main thing is to go to [BookLaunch.com](https://www.booklaunch.com), that's where I have my newsletter and all my resources and articles are there. Actually just today, I launched my own podcast.

It's [BookLaunchShow.com](https://www.booklaunchshow.com) and I have the first three episodes up and I'm basically sharing a lot of my launch strategy in more depth.

And I'm also working on three different launches right now for clients and so I'm kind of gonna share real time in what we're working on and the process there. So yeah, that's where you can find me.

James Blatch: There we go, Tim Grahl. I told you he had a nice voice. A nice melodic U.S. accent. He's getting very interested, because we're learning from each other, he's become an expert in many areas, but he knows Facebook advertising is a big area for him and he needs to learn more about it, actually.

Mark Dawson: And he's taken our course.

James Blatch: He has taken our course, yeah. And at the time we recorded the interview, he'd just started it and was really enjoying what he was learning, so it'd be interesting to tap into him, see what difference that's made on his career.

Because someone like Tim, with his abilities and his focus, Facebook advertising could really be a blue touch paper moment for him and his books. But really valuable and interesting juxtaposition with your own experience of launch. You've become a bit of a ninja at launching, so people are getting hopefully good value out of listening to both of those interviews.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, so he does know his onions, as we say over here, when it comes to launching, and I love the way he breaks it down into influencers and list members and cold traffic and all that stuff. That's exactly what I do. Just with different way of describing it.

Really, really useful, I recommend people check out his books and also the podcast is really good, as you say, for someone who's focusing on craft. There aren't that many podcasts, in fact I can't think of another one, that focuses on actually writing the book. Most of the time, it's about the things that you do afterwards. We tend to focus on marketing, with bits and pieces of other stuff as well, but for actual craft-focused podcast, that's probably the best one out there at the moment.

James Blatch: Yeah, definitely. And what I found interesting about Tim's interview, because a lot of our focus is launching online courses, I thought a lot of it was relevant to that as well, talking about the influencers, what type of people you're aiming, you're marketing at, who are going to be the people you aim at, I thought that worked across the board. Not just for books, but for other things, as well. So yeah, really good. Excellent, thank you very much indeed. Yes, we're gonna mention our vault, again. You could say it out loud.

Mark Dawson: I can say it out loud, yes. So as James mentioned last week, we've put together all of the transcripts. So we've had transcripts all the way from the start. For two reasons, really, it's great for SEO so it helps people to find our podcast, to have those transcripts on the website, and also of course, we get lots of people who say they prefer to read. Others say they may be hard of hearing and would prefer to read than try and listen to the podcast. So we've always had those available. But I just thought that we weren't really using them to their full effect. Obviously, it's not cheap to get those, get the episodes transcribed. So we'd like to use them a bit more effectively.

What we have done is put together an ebook of all of the transcripts, or almost all of the transcripts, a couple that weren't relevant we've dropped out. And they've been edited. The show notes are in there, the links. And of course, as an ebook, it's all searchable.

So rather than Googling and trying to find what you want, if you're interested in an episode on selling to Apple for example, or on Apple, you could go to the episode and then, using your device or even on your computer, you can then use the search function to find out when we're talking specifically about Apple.

And that goes for anything else that you're looking for as well, so we have that available. It is completely free. You don't need to pay us a cent for that, it's available for nothing. And you can get it at SelfPublishingFormula.com/Vault.

James Blatch: Correct. You did that one rather nicely, considering you hesitantly whispered at me as if it was my job to do that. About time you pulled your weight as co-presenter.

Mark Dawson: Talk about pulling weight. Look at the man sleeping.

John Dyer: Sorry, did you want something?

Mark Dawson: For listeners, James was talking about Mr. Diagon, not me.

James Blatch: If you do want to see our ugly mugs, you can go to YouTube and look at our Self-Publishing Formula channel. Did you yawn on us at that? I heard yawning. Not only do you get the Vault ebook at SelfPublishingFormula.com/Vault, but of course at our main website, SelfPublishingFormula.com. You can download all our previous podcasts.

Great. Thank you so much indeed for listening, for being with us. Hope you enjoyed Tim Grahl's interview. We will speak to you again next week.

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