

EPISODE 90: USING BOOKBUB CPM ADS FOR PROFIT – WITH ADAM CROSS

Announcer: Two writers. One just starting out, the other, a bestseller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello, and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula podcast with Mark Dawson and James Blatch.

We should say we had a go at doing this late last night. We both had gin and tonic. You had beer as well, and for reasons not related to alcohol, we're doing it again today.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, because we like to be professional and it wasn't quite right and also my hard drive filled up as we were recording, which was about as professional as you can expect from me after a gin and a beer.

James Blatch: But, we set high standards and it's very nice to occasionally comment on that and say that we have high production values and we do work at that. We appreciate your calls. Thank you.

Mark Dawson: Well, you do.

James Blatch: Yeah. You're show and go, as we call you in the business.

Mark Dawson: That's me.

James Blatch: It's a busy time for us, obviously, at the moment. We're running up to one of our occasional course launches. This is the big one.

It's Advertising for Authors. It's the flagship course and we can announce the date. That's been settled this morning. That will be released on, do you want to do a drum roll?

Mark Dawson: I'm doing one now.

James Blatch: November 8, 2017. 10:00 pm, UK time, which is 5:00 pm. I haven't even checked, we've probably, by accident, got that crossover time with America, but it's 10:00 pm in the UK time, hopefully 5:00 pm in New York and that would be 5, 4, 3, 2:00 pm on the west coast, but anyway.

Mark Dawson: I'm not getting involved with that.

I had a phone call with Amazon Marketing Services in Seattle to talk about AMS and I was on the line at 9:00 pm and we expected them both to be there and, of course, I said GMT and it's still BST. They were waiting. They were on for another hour and of course I was like, "It's their fault. They've made a terrible mistake."

James Blatch: At least it was that way around. You would have felt worse. Sat there for an hour waiting for you. I don't suppose I would've stayed for an hour.

Mark Dawson: As it is, I just felt like an idiot, which is not unusual when it comes to time zones and things. Standard for me.

James Blatch: Now that we're not farmers anymore, or not many of us are farmers anymore, I know you live in a very rural area, so do I, I do wonder how long the daylight savings is going to go on. But anyways, it's too difficult to change at the moment, so it's there.

Okay, so yes, November 8th, Advertising for Authors, and we're just settling down on some of the detail of that, such as the place to go to see the course and read all about it and potentially purchase it. So all that

information will go out, just make sure you're in our Facebook groups and on our mailing list and you will hear about it.

I've recently got back from a couple of weeks in the States where we spoke to a whole bunch of people who've taken the course at various stages. Some right at the beginning and some much more recently.

We had an absolutely brilliant time. It's always heartening to hear people talking in such glowing terms about the course and just always heartening just to be within the positive feel of self-published authors who are getting on and changing their lives and improving their lives with their writing.

I've got too many to name, but we're rolling out those little films onto Facebook. We actually rolled out Garret Robinson this morning. We got to see him in Oregon, along with Maggie Mae Lynch.

Garret was a guy just waiting for you to turn up in his life actually, Mark, wasn't he, because he's a good writer, he's got good inventory on the shelf, and just had struggled to do the next thing and then couldn't quite work out how to do it.

Suddenly, you popped up with a couple of emails in his inbox and he is now living the dream.

Mark Dawson: Yes, he's done amazing. Garret's a good bloke and one of the, as I said in the Facebook group, he was actually the first person to join the mastery Facebook group that's associated with the course, so he's in there right at the start so I've always been delighted to watch how things have gone for him.

James Blatch: Yeah, he's part of the SPF legend allure.

Mark Dawson: He is, he is.

James Blatch: There's a slightly linked to the course podcast, but it does standalone by itself as well, so if you're in the course already or you have no intention of buying the course, this stage might be too early for you, this podcast will still be very relevant.

This is going to be about BookBub ads, and the reason it's linked to the course is we're delighted to announce that we have a brand new bonus course that goes along with advertising for those joining that stable, which is going to be **BookBub Ads for Authors**.

What's fascinating about this, and I'm editing the course at the moment, it's brilliantly done. Not by Mark or me.

We have a guest author, and that is somebody who just got under the skin, and while lots of other people were falling away a little bit with BookBub ads, some people were making money. A lot of people saying can't make it work.

This guy thought, "I think this platform might work with some careful attention." He gave it that careful attention, he really did, and he has put together a brilliant blow-by-blow explanation of how to make the BookBub ads platform work for you.

The author in question is our old friend Adam Croft.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, he's done great so people will probably know who Adam is. But he took the ads course second or third time around and had tremendous success with just one book, which is counter to what my usual teaching is when it comes to Facebook ads. But he did really well.

He contacted me maybe six months ago and said, "What are your feelings on BookBub CPM ads?"

I tried them a bit. They worked very well for me on launch time because I'll tend to send ads on a limited timeframe to people who like me on BookBub, so that's maybe six or seven thousand people BookBub thinks like me. Maybe a bit more than that now I suppose. Also to a very select cadre of similar authors.

Those work well, but then I was one of the ones who dropped off. I don't use it. I didn't use it as part of my regular armory until then.

But Adam showed me what he was doing, especially with regards to non-Amazon US sales. I had another look at it and I got back into it again, and I am very pleased to say that this is one of the rare occasions where I was wrong, and Adam is bang-on.

He really did well with these BookBub CPM ads. The module he's put together is great. He's a really good presenter.

It's the usual high standard that you'd expect from the Blatch editing suite, and it's some really fantastic actionable tips that will enable people to take BookBub CPM ads and insert them into their regular ads platform and sell books.

Especially books on places like Apple, Kobo, Barnes & Noble, even Google. I've sold books on Google, which I thought I'd never be able to say, but that's been made possible by these ads.

James Blatch: Lots of good detail coming up in the podcast. Obviously it's not the same level of detail we can go into in the several-hour long course. I haven't actually totaled it all up, but it's several hours, probably double figures, and 19-odd sessions from memory.

For me, it's a classic SPF course in that you can go elsewhere and learn how to use a platform.

You can learn how to use AdWords, you can learn how to use Facebook Ads. This course tells you how to make it work for you, and it's not really about using it.

You get the bit about setting up your account and then how it works and then the meat of this is how specifically as a self-published author to get the most out of it and make it work for you.

It's a really brilliant course and we've got a great interview with Adam, who very kindly also put together a PDF giveaway with some top tips to get you started on BookBub ads.

Just to reinforce, as we do at the beginning of the interview as well, this is not about BookBub featured deals. **This is not a tips on how to get a BookBub featured deal**, although that is a bonus session actually in the course if you do end up with the course.

However, this is about the ads platform, the paid ads platform where you can put your little ad at the bottom of emails using their targeting system.

Adam's put together a giveaway and to get that, quite simply, go to SelfPublishingFormula.com/BookBubAds, all one word, BookBubAds, SelfPublishingFormula.com/BookBubAds.

Mark, I think we'll go into the interview and listen to what Adam's got to say. It's a great interview and I hope you're going to get a lot out of it. Then Mark and I will have a little chat after that.

Adam Croft, I think you get more mentions on the podcast than almost anybody else.

I just got back from the States and we were interviewing Johnny B. Truant and Shawn Platt from the Self-Publishing podcast, and they've launched a really interesting new product, which is effectively when you buy a book

framework, but because they're editors and they're publishers, they are basically selling a service where they write the whole thing in detailed plot.

You have high converting cover, high converting taglines, and then they work with you. You pay \$5,000, I think it is, for it. They work with you so you produce the book. So it's an interesting service in the developing world that we live in of self-publishing.

Of course, I mentioned you as being starting with something high converting and then writing the book backwards.

They loved the story of the tagline and the book and the idea and the Facebook advert, and then the reverse engineered book. Because that's your background.

I guess we should start before we move onto the meat of today's subject with a bit about you for people who are, somehow, there must be someone somewhere who's unfamiliar with your story.

Why don't you give us the skinny?

Adam Croft: I'm sure there are plenty of them. I'm sure there are plenty.

I've been writing professionally for about seven years now and I was just about muddling along for quite a while. Paying the bills and the usual kind of story, and it was my ninth book that really kicked things off, "Her Last Tomorrow," which is the one that you mentioned having that very marketable hook and coming at it from that concept and knowing that it would be one that it would be one that could be used with some powerful marketing.

But that wasn't something that I really realized until a little bit later on actually. I'd written probably three-quarters of the book, wasn't able to get it finished, and it sat in the drawer unused.

Until I discovered the Ads for Authors course through SPF, or Facebook Ads for Authors I think it was then.

Started to use it for a few of my books and got some success, but realized that my books just weren't going to be attracting enough attention. There was nothing particularly special about them that was going to stand out from anything else in people's Facebook news feeds.

Then I remembered this book that I had that was under three-quarters done that I couldn't get finished, and it wasn't in a series and everybody says write in a series.

I thought well, **if anything's going to make Facebook ads sing, it's going to be this one.** So I plugged away and I got it finished, and I put it out and I started firing some ads to it, and it worked.

So that was the book that kind of tipped things over the edge for me, and meant that rather than writing just being a job, something that I do and it just brings in some money, it became my thing, really. It's now income for my whole family, which is great.

James Blatch: You're being a little bit modest because it's even more than income for your whole family. We're not talking about an average salary.

You've done very well from this book. Well, really from that one book, and now you've built on that.

Adam Croft: Yeah. I'm now at the point where I think I'm just approaching 1.3 million downloads of my books so yeah, that certainly changed a lot. I think that's responsible for a large amount of them.

The book that came afterwards as well, which had been snapped up by Thomas and Mercer, which went into Kindle First as well, was responsible for a lot of those sales and a lot of that exposure as well.

It's kicked on from there. It's like all authors, anything in this industry. You have good months and you have bad months, but generally speaking it's a lot better than it was before, yeah.

James Blatch: Your life's changed as a result of that in a few ways. I know that your wife has been able to give up her job, and you're about to move.

You've cleverly made your house look like it's normal, but I know it's not.

Adam Croft: It's the one room I've not been allowed to pack yet because I've got a couple of interviews and videos to do still, so I've got to make it look like I'm here busy working when I'm actually busy frantically packing boxes instead.

It's allowed us to upsize the house as well. We've got a young child now so it's a case of having to rather than wanting to.

My wife now works with me on the marketing and the publishing side of things, which allows me to focus more on the writing. It's become a family business really.

James Blatch: Today we have you on, Adam, because obviously clearly you have mastered many aspects of social media advertising. You're a man who can make things work.

Adam Croft: I'm getting there.

James Blatch: Well you are. You're more than getting there. As your bottom line would show. You can optimize and dig into the detail and so on.

When a couple of the newer platforms came along, AMS Ads and BookBub Ads, we know that you're somebody who takes great interest in those and makes them work if they can.

BookBub Ads have been successful for you.

Adam Croft: They have, yeah. Fairly recently, though.

I was one of the first people in on the testing when it opened up a year or two back now, I think.

Like most people, I played around with it and I set up some ads and I thought, yeah, it's nice but the audiences are small. It's not something you can easily tweak and use to your advantage. I kind of left it alone really.

It was a few months ago in one of those laying awake at 3:00 in the morning listening to a baby scream moments that I suddenly started thinking more about it.

When I thought about the background to BookBub, what it is, where those audiences come from, how BookBub builds those audiences, I started to kind of think more about it.

They changed the system a little bit around that time as well so that **you could split off targeting different vendors with one ad** and you can see what was working and what wasn't.

I started to try again and dug down in a little bit more detail and the wife and I've been doing that now for probably about six months, something

like that, testing it in more detail. Six months and about \$10,000 later I think I'm about ready to share it all.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Adam Croft: It's not something that you will replace Facebook ads or AMS but used in tandem with is, I think sort of completes that trinity.

James Blatch: Well you've got to the point where Mark Dawson has commissioned you to write a module for the Ads for Authors course, which obviously shows you've attained a certain zen level of competence with BookBub ads.

Adam Croft: Yes, I'm in the club now.

James Blatch: You get a t-shirt, but you haven't got a mug. I have to say, I don't know why.

Adam Croft: Well, I've got a great mug. I've got this one.

James Blatch: It's a really good mug. If you watch them on YouTube, yes, it's a really good ...

Adam Croft: Which has never had coffee in it because I've not actually drunk coffee in nearly a year now.

James Blatch: How can you not drink coffee? You're the only author I've ever met who doesn't drink coffee.

Adam Croft: I used to drink about eight cups a day.

James Blatch: Oh okay.

Adam Croft: Last Christmas, I got quite ill. Not because of coffee, but I just didn't fancy coffee for a long time, and after about three weeks I thought was no point in going back onto it because I was clearly addicted before. So I've been on the green tea ever since.

James Blatch: Green tea, very good. Chai. I'm jet lagged and I would not be doing this interview at the moment if it wasn't for my drug of choice. But I'm only a two-a-day man.

Adam Croft: Yeah.

James Blatch: At the moment, it's not a habit.

Adam Croft: We all start off like that, James.

James Blatch: Yeah. Nescafe's my gateway. Okay, so we're going to talk about BookBub ads in a little bit more detail in this episode of the podcast and that's why you're on.

We should start with a general outline. I've been editing your course. It's quite funny at the beginning how often you're stressing, "This is not BookBub Featured Deals."

You kind of hit, "This is not BookBub Featured Deals. This is not BookBub Featured Deals. This is BookBub ads."

Why don't we explain what BookBub is, why people know it most commonly, and then move onto the ads platform?

Adam Croft: Most people know BookBub because of BookBub Featured Deals, and this is not BookBub Featured Deals.

BookBub in short, for anybody who doesn't know, is a service that essentially ties up readers with books. If you sign up as a reader, you will be

sent an email every day or every week, whichever you choose, for the genres that you subscribe to.

They will send you deals for books in that genre for authors you might not know and books you might not have heard of you might want to take a try on. They're either free or they're 99 cents.

For authors, it's a great way of getting your books in front of those readers, because BookBub's audiences are huge. I meant they're not as big as Facebook's or Amazon's but relatively speaking, for a mailing list of readers it's enormous.

Generally speaking, what we're talking about is these featured deals, which you pay a lot of money to be included in.

For me and my genres, it's generally low four-figures to be included for one day. But you will usually make your money back and that's why it's been the holy grail of authors for a long time, and they've always been very keen on getting these featured deals.

A couple of years ago, in the emails, they started to include paid-for CPM ads at the bottom of the emails, which is what this course is about because the featured deals have an editorial process, they have an extortionate fee, and most people are rejected for no good reason other than they are enormously over-subscribed.

Doing ads means that you can get into those BookBub emails and be exposed to that audience of voracious readers for a pretty low cost when you're looking at it compared to Facebook ads, for example. So that's what the course focuses on. It focuses on those CPM ads.

James Blatch: We're going to talk about the nitty-gritty in a moment. Just on that point about it's expensive to get a featured deal, however you make your money back.

There's another aspect to that, which is the exposure you get even if it's not a direct sale, and I've heard quite a few authors, in fact, I've been chatting to a couple in the last couple of weeks who said for them, it was a transitional moment for them, getting that BookBub deal that went beyond the actual income they got back immediately.

It gave them an exposure level.

Is there a knock-on effect with the ads platform for that? Or a similar effect?

Adam Croft: There is because the audience is the same. The people who respond to featured deals are the people who respond to ads, because it's being shown to the same people and it's the same audience.

You're right. It's not just the book that goes into a featured deal that has the success and makes back the money if you're advertising.

For example, a lot of people would advertise their book free on BookBub and you think well how can you possibly make your money back on that? If you're advertising a first in series or a first three box set, the read through effect is something that makes the ad profit anyway.

BookBub's readers are voracious. I can't remember the exact stats that are in the course, but it's something like 95% will read a book through BookBub from an author that they've never heard of.

And something like two-thirds of them will, if they liked the book, will go out and buy the rest, and they'll buy them at full price. They're not just after discounts.

This is a way of picking up readers who could be your next super fans. It's not kind of the scatter gun approach of Facebook or AMS. It's much more targeted.

It's a different form of advertising. It's not that wide branding advertising necessarily, but picking up those very specific, very keen readers who perhaps haven't heard of you.

James Blatch: Yeah. They're a great team. Katie Donelan was in Florida with her team and we've had her on the podcast in the past, and will again in the future.

They don't rest on their laurels. I don't think BookBub's a passing phase. I think they will adapt and change, and they're at the top of their game at the moment. The ads platform was a natural movement forward for them I think. So let's bring our focus onto the ads platform.

First of all, I think we're still at the stage where you, probably always will be with them, where you have to be sort of invited to take part in ads.

Is that the correct term? There's a process you go through.

Adam Croft: Yeah. There's a waiting list you have to join. Not quite sure how long it is at the moment, or how long you have to wait. There's different stories on that, so I'm not quite sure on how the inviting order works and how many people are being invited how often.

But the best thing to do if you're listening to this now is to get on the waiting list. Go to BookBub's website. We'll put a link at the end of the podcast as well to help people get there and get their name on the list because you could be waiting a little while to get on.

Once you're in, it's all systems go, really. Because it's limited with who can advertise at the moment, it's good fun to have a play around and see what

works. Things aren't being flooded too much in the way that they perhaps are in some other platforms.

James Blatch: What does it look and feel like compared to AMS and Facebook ads and the other platforms? Are we talking about a similar beast?

Adam Croft: In some ways. But I personally think it's better to use. Certainly from a reporting point of view and from a usability point of view, it trumps both Facebook and AMS.

Facebook can be very confusing when you got power editor and ads manager for setting up ads and all the rest of it.

James Blatch: Well you've got power editor at the moment. Some people are clinging onto it, but that's being phased out. That's another aspect of the Facebook platform, that it changes a lot.

Believe me, we know all about that because we have a course geared around that. We frequently have to change it. But yes, so they're collapsing it down to the single ads manager.

Adam Croft: Yeah, and it's confusing. It's bloated, it's used for much wider things than just advertising books so it can be. There's a lot of stuff on there that you just don't need.

Similar for AMS really. Anyone who's used AMS probably doesn't need me to comment on the reporting and the stat side of things, and how accurate and up-to-date and useful that is, he says through bitter teeth.

James Blatch: With heavy sarcasm.

Adam Croft: **BookBub bridges that gap quite nicely because it is for authors only.** You can't advertise anything other than books on there. You

can't even advertise your mailing list. It's literally books for sale that you advertise.

The reporting is fantastic. It's pretty much instantaneous as well, and it doesn't suffer from this kind of needing to settle effect that Facebook does, for example. **You don't need to wait a week to see if an ad is working.**

You normally see within the first day what's happening with it, so you've probably only spent a dollar or two for finding out it works or doesn't work. I've completely forgotten where I was going from there.

James Blatch: That's all right. We're talking about the platform. I guess in my mind with somebody who perhaps has just got into one of the platforms, AMS or Facebook ads, whatever, and thinking, "Am I going to be able to master this? Is this going to be too complicated for me?"

But actually what you're saying to me is aesthetically and reporting-wise, perhaps a little bit easier than some of those other platforms?

Adam Croft: Yeah, if you're not somebody who's technically minded and if you are scared and put off by Facebook ads and setting them up, and the same with AMS, I would probably say jump in with BookBub because it is probably the most easy to use platform out there.

It's very usable, very easy to set an ad up. In terms of the graphics, I would always recommend having your own ones created, but you don't even need to do that. BookBub will automatically generate an ad graphic for you if you want them to. They don't convert as well ...

James Blatch: What, from your cover?

Adam Croft: Yes, using the cover. You type in the name of the book and it automatically grabs the cover, or you can upload a different one if you want

to. You can change the text and what's written on the button, and BookBub does the rest.

It's not what I would recommend if you have got access to a designer. You can either design your own, or pay for a designer. But if you're just looking to test a couple of dollars and see what happens, then that's a great way of doing it.

I would always recommend if you can having your own ads designed, especially if you're looking to do BookBub ads as a serious part of your marketing plan because the increased conversion rates, and therefore the increased profits, will usually pay you back for the money you spent on the advert itself and more.

Of course, it gives you the option to test as well. You can change colors, you can change graphics. You can swap things around and see what works. So you can't really split tests in the same way with the automatically generated ads.

James Blatch: You briefly mentioned budget for ads.

What are the limiting factors here? How much do you need to play with here to get going?

Adam Croft: Generally speaking, a lot less than Facebook. It's not as hit-and-miss as AMS either.

Generally speaking even with a bigger author audience, I will still only spend on one ad about \$5 a day. Something like that. Because the audiences are smaller, you can drain them more quickly, but that doesn't actually matter because BookBub only shows your ad to readers a set number of times and then it won't show it again.

So it's not like Facebook where it'll keep doing it or get tied and the cost per click will go up and fly out through the roof.

It's much more usable from that point of view, and the clicks tend to be a lot cheaper as well. I've had a lot of instances where **I've been getting clicks for literally a cent or two.**

Sometimes it can be much more, but the beauty of BookBub is it reports in such a way that you can just switch off one particular aspect of the ad.

Say I've got an ad running for one of my books. It's running to all retailers and all territories. If I can see from the reporting that it's not working as well Apple US as it is everywhere else, I can just hit the toggle button and I can switch off Apple US and it'll continue showing everywhere else.

But the more expensive and the lower converting channels won't show anymore. So you've got that macro control over it and you don't need to set up an individual ad for Apple, one for Kobo, one for the US. **You just set up an ad for that book to that audience and everything else is controllable thereafter.**

James Blatch: So explain that to me. When I see the advert at the bottom of my email from BookBub, you've targeted Apple and Amazon separately, so how does that work from a user point of view?

When I click on the book, when I click on the ad, where do I get sent to? How do I choose that?

Adam Croft: BookBub will have you down as either a Kindle reader, or an Apple reader, or a Kobo reader, only because you selected it when you set up your BookBub account.

You've told it or it knows which links you tend to click on in BookBub feature deal emails. So it has you down as one of those, and it knows which

country you're in as well. So that's how it decides which one to show to you, so you'll be effectively in that audience. You could be in two of them. You could be down as a Kindle reader and a Kobo reader. But the link to the ad will send you to one or to the other.

James Blatch: Okay, so when you create the ad, you put in the various links. You could only put in an Amazon link and your ad's then only going to be served to people BookBub know are Kindle readers, or buy their books from Amazon. Okay.

Adam Croft: Yeah. Generally speaking, I tend to avoid Amazon US, Amazon UK. I do sometimes try them, but they tend to be where most people are sending the ads. The clicks tend to be a bit more expensive.

Of course, if you're in KDP select, then that's not a problem because you got page reads and other things that can nullify that effect. But **generally speaking, I use it for picking up sales at Kobo and Nook and iBooks as well.**

James Blatch: Okay, and that's quite a big point, Adam. Let's just dwell on that for a second because I've spoken to a few people who've not got the ads working as profitably as you have.

I've said to them, because I'm doing the course now that you've written, I've said to them, "Well Adam Croft says don't serve to Amazon," and they're like, "What? Why would I not serve to the biggest retailer on the planet?"

But this is something you found, and it could be the difference between being profitable and not being profitable with BookBub ads.

Adam Croft: Well, it's not all about Amazon, especially if you're wide. For me, Amazon is probably not even half of my monthly income. It's still the

biggest player in many ways, but there's AMS for that, that's purely for Amazon.

There's Facebook ads, which work a lot better for Amazon quite often than they do for other retailers.

This is the ads platform that is very, very good at picking up sales in other platforms. It's not to say it doesn't work with Amazon. It does. I quite often shift a fair few books at Amazon through BookBub ads, but that needs to be managed in a particular way.

If you're in KDP Select, then don't think, oh well, BookBub ads aren't any good for Amazon, because if you're in Select, you've got Page Reads and that tends to make up the difference, which is something I can't take advantage of because my books are wide.

But yeah, for me I've found it is a lot better for picking up those sales on other retailers. So if you are wide, if you've got books on Kobo, if you got books on iBooks and Nook, this is where you can really utilize an advertising platform that makes the most of those because that's something you can't do through AMS, and it's something that is tricky through Facebook as well.

James Blatch: Well there's one big takeaway from this interview today for people to try if they were looking to get these into profit for them.

\$5 a day seems quite low for a seven-figure author like you. That was sort of surprising to me.

Adam Croft: Well this is per ad and I've normally got a few running. A couple of dozen at least.

James Blatch: Okay. But nonetheless, for each ad. But like you say, **if you're getting clicks at one or two cents, that \$5 goes quite a long way.**

Adam Croft: It does, yeah. The conversion rates are normally quite good as well through BookBub because you're not getting anybody clicking on those ads who's not a reader.

No matter how narrowly you target an audience on Facebook, there's always going to be some spillover. It's always going to show to some people who're never going to read your books.

The example that I use in the course is my dad. He sees my Facebook ads show up in his Facebook feed and he clicks on Like and shares them because he's my dad and he wants to help me out.

But as a result, Facebook thinks that he really likes crime fiction now, and he just doesn't read books at all. As a result, he's seeing crime fiction book ads in his news feed all the time, and he's never going to click them and he's never going to buy them.

So you're not getting that effect with BookBub because the only people who are seeing those ads are people who have signed up to be shown deals on a daily basis, and have said, "Hey BookBub, each day can you send me some books I might like?"

You're basically giving them what they've asked for, whereas on Facebook people generally speaking don't go on there to buy a book. You've got to catch them in a different frame of mind. I mean, they're kind of semi-receptive. They're not busy working, clearly, they're on Facebook.

But you've got to make the extra effort to grab them, whereas with BookBub you don't need to because they've opened up that email because they want to see what new books are available.

James Blatch: I think obviously you should send your dad an invoice for \$5 or \$10 for all those clicks he's costing you.

How do you track conversions? BookBub's got a pretty good reporting platform you say.

Adam Croft: It has. It shows you obviously everything like ROI like most ad platforms. But you can use affiliate tracking with your BookBub ads.

If you say this is my book, I want to advertise on Kobo and Apple and on Amazon, it will pre-populate links, but you can edit those links and you can add your affiliate tags, which is how you can track ROI.

BookBub will let you know how many times your ad's being shown, how many times it's being clicked. It doesn't actually, at the moment, tell you the cost per click, but that's easy enough to work out by dividing one by the other. It gives you the click-through rate as well.

You can see how much you spent, you can then go into your Amazon affiliates or your iTunes affiliate account, and you can see how much is being made in sales on that day, and you can calculate your ROI that way.

It's not as hit-and-miss as it used to be. I was quite late to the party actually discovering that you can use affiliate tags, but that means you can directly see how much money you're making from these ads.

James Blatch: You're running several ads, and you tend to run about \$5 a day.

In terms of your overall ad spend, is BookBub an important part of where your marketing effort goes now?

Adam Croft: Yeah it is. I think it's probably split between the three. I'm not really doing anything on Facebook at the moment, but that's purely a time thing with everything else that's going on. So that needs more micromanagement, whereas **BookBub and AMS can be left to run to a certain extent.**

But yeah, \$5 a day. The reason I do that is because it's not the same as Facebook in that scaling it up has huge advantages, because it doesn't. Facebook's got an enormous audience.

If you're spending \$5 a day and your audience is a million, it's going to take a long, long time for you to reach all of those, and the ad will probably then be tired for a number of other reasons. It might just look old by the time it's got to that millionth viewer.

But with BookBub, there's really no advantage. All you're doing really by hammering the budget out in one day or two days is getting the same number of views and the same number of sales in one go rather than spreading out over time.

So I tend to prefer personally to have that drip feed effect, and I don't need to worry about the ad getting stale because **after it's been seen a handful of times by each person, BookBub stops showing it.** So you don't get an old ad that runs away with itself.

James Blatch: Okay. Well let's move on to targeting, Adam. It's another real advantage of BookBub's audience as opposed to Facebook's audience in that **you're targeting not just people who read and buy books, but genre-specific readers as well.**

Adam Croft: Yeah, I mean the way that BookBub builds the audience is, say for example you get BookBub's featured deal emails every day, one of my books is in a featured deal. If you click on that, then as far as BookBub is concerned, you show an interest in my books. So when somebody else

then goes to run an ad and enters one of the keywords as Adam Croft, you're then in the audience because you've shown that you've got an interest in those books.

That's how you would essentially run an ad to a certain audience through BookBub. It allows you only two things you can use in targeting, and that's author names and genres.

There's no kind of Facebook having to think of keywords and all the rest of it, and AMS. It's not quite as broad. It's very, very specific. You can't run an ad to an audience that isn't big enough either, so it will only let you run an ad that's got a decent sized audience that you're likely to get some kind of return from.

It's different in that sense. I tend to run ads. Each one will go to one author, because even though in the reporting, BookBub will spit that out so you can see which vendors and which territories are working, which ones aren't.

It doesn't do the same by keyword, so you have to do that manually by creating an ad for each one, which I find tends to work best because otherwise you could run one to three or four authors in one ad, and one of the author keywords could be costing you an absolute bomb and pushing the price of the rest up, but you wouldn't know which one it is.

So in terms of getting that control, **it's best to run an ad for one book and one author keyword to all the vendors and territories you're looking to target.**

James Blatch: Okay. Another good tip.

The editorial look and feel of the adverts, is there anything specific to BookBub you do in terms of what you say, the copy you use, the taglines?

Adam Croft: General marketing principles really, but it's difficult because the ads are quite small, so you have to try and squeeze a lot on without making it look cluttered.

That's the art of it really. There are certain things that it's best practice to use. Things like calls to action.

But the thing is with calls to action is they're kind of misunderstood sometimes. People think you've got to have something bold like "Buy Now" or "Get this book," and that does sound a little bit kind of grabby sometimes.

I always find the best thing to do is to make people want the book and that kind of call to action is much stronger. Rather than telling them, "Hey, you want this book. Buy it now." You tend to get that kind of response.

James Blatch: Well they're readers, and they're looking for books they want to read. So if they find a book they want to read, they don't need a CTA because they're going to click on it and buy it. So that would make more sense for a BookBub audience.

Adam Croft: It does. They're not looking for a salesman either. This is a digital bookshop they're looking to browse through and see what grabs their attention, not what's being necessarily sold to them.

Having some kind of mention that they need to click is good because otherwise it's just kind of a roughly square graphic at the bottom of the email, which could be anything.

It looks different to the featured deals as well so it's not immediately obvious that you can click it to get that book.

Mentions of discounting and pricing does work. But we know from BookBub's own stats that they released that **three-quarters of their**

readers will buy full price books. So it's not vital that you've got a book on offer. So this is where it's different from featured deals again.

You don't need to have your book free or at 99 cents. You can advertise a \$6-7 box set quite happily through BookBub ads without any issues at all. I know Mark's done exactly that and makes very good returns. It's a different beast from the other platforms in that sense.

James Blatch: You talked about having the ads designed. BookBub will turn your cover into an advert, but your preference is to have something designed.

How different does that look from the one that BookBub would spit out from your cover?

Adam Croft: It looks as different as you want it to look if you're having it designed yourself. I mean the thing about the BookBub ones is they are quite formulaic, so they do look roughly the same.

They perhaps don't stand out as much because there are going to be a lot of adverts that look like that because anyone who's using the auto-generation feature will have an ad that looks broadly similar, at least from a branding point of view. So you don't get to set yourself apart like that.

So that's one downside to it, and that's perhaps why they don't convert as well. You don't have the level of control either. You can't, for example, change the color of the button. You can't swap the cover over to a different side or take the cover off and use some other kind of imagery.

You're kind of boxed in slightly by what the system can do, so you don't have that same level of control and the ability to test as you would if you're using custom graphics.

James Blatch: Yeah. Launch time. So let's say you come up with a new book. You've got an audience on BookBub and there are probably other authors targeting your name because of your profile.

Adam Croft: Yeah.

James Blatch: You talked earlier about spending a little bit less and spreading the sales over a few days.

Is BookBub a platform that you could utilize to get yourself up the rankings in those all-important first few days of a new book?

Adam Croft: It is, yeah. There are two different ways of advertising at BookBub. Like I said, you can target authors and you can target genres.

Generally speaking, for direct sales, just targeting a genre, even though you might have a bigger audience, it's not going to convert as well as targeting specific reader audiences. But it is quite good for branding.

For example, building awareness of a new release that's available for pre-order and getting those eyes on those books. Then later on, once the book's out or once you want to get more specific and get people to start actually buying it, you can target specific author audiences.

One of the ones that always works well and that you should always use, especially when you're advertising a new release, if your audience is big enough, is to target yourself because almost without exception you will be your best audience.

For example, if I'm targeting, say, Mark Dawson as a target audience, even though my books aren't anything like his, which wouldn't be a good move from the start, but then people who see the ad are people who like Mark Dawson's books and might also like mine.

Whereas, if I'm targeting myself as a keyword, I'm targeting people who I know like my books. They've clicked on my ads in the past. They've clicked on my featured deals in the past, or they've gone to BookBub and followed me on BookBub.

So these are people who they're aware of me. The branding bit is already done, so you don't have that initial battle. They're already aware of you. For a launch that is a very, very worthwhile strategy.

James Blatch: Yeah, definitely. It just occurred to me that, particularly yourself, targeting yourself for those early days and getting that visibility.

Adam Croft: Yeah.

James Blatch: We know that momentum can carry through for launch can be an important factor in the success of a book.

Adam Croft: Yeah. There will be, even if you got a new book out we can get ourselves sometimes sending something out to the mailing list and putting it on Facebook, everyone's aware of it.

But open rates on emails, even having a third or a half of your mailing list open your emails is a good result, so that's a lot of people who haven't been made aware of the book.

People who don't go on Facebook all the time. Facebook doesn't show everything in everybody's news feeds. There are a lot of people that can slip through the net, and even fans of yours can not know you've got a book out. They've got other stuff going on in their lives as well. They need to be reminded a few times that it's there.

So that's where targeting your own readers can help. It can really remind them that that book is there.

James Blatch: Adam, you'll be pleased with a frog in your throat to know that we're coming towards the end of this interview. You can go and hack.

Adam Croft: I'm in good company. I'm going to call it doing a Theresa May.

James Blatch: Yes, we just had our prime minister cough her way through a conference speech where all sorts of things went wrong for her.

Adam Croft: Fortunately this hasn't been as bad.

James Blatch: Comically, the slogan behind her kept dropping. We were in the States watching this. It was on YouTube videos but she was making this speech and it said, "Build a Better Britain" or whatever people were saying, and the letters were dropping like ... Once things start going wrong ...

Adam Croft: It's going so well for her, isn't it?

James Blatch: Yeah, once things start to go wrong in politics. It reminds me of Gordon Brown whatever he did for a few days. Nothing worked.

Adam Croft: Couldn't win.

James Blatch: Couldn't win. There you go. Anyway, we're talking about winning today, right? Tiger blood, as what's-his-name from Two and a Half Men would say. Martin Sheen. No, Charlie Sheen.

Adam Croft: I was thinking tiger feet, but that was something totally different.

James Blatch: Blood, yeah. There's about you, me, Mark, and maybe three other people who listen to the podcast who get that reference. But yeah, if you're British.

Adam Croft: There's a tiny ripple just went around the world going.

James Blatch: Brilliant. Is there anything we've missed? Anything I've missed in terms of quizzing you about top tips or values to take away from this chat about BookBub ads?

Adam Croft: I don't think so. No, I think it's far too early in the morning to be quizzed, so I'm happy with that if you are.

James Blatch: I am as well. Yeah, so it's been brilliant.

This is a standalone interview and we want people to get some value out of it, but obviously part and parcel in the next few weeks is that Adam's put together really fantastic detailed online course on how to run and maintain BookBub ads and then give you the better chance of making them a profitable part of your marketing setup, and that's wrapped into our Advertising for Authors online course, which is coming up.

Can't remember when this is going out because it's very early in the morning, as you say. Particularly for me.

Adam Croft: I don't know what day it is today.

James Blatch: I'm living in a different time zone and you're about to move, so we're all over the place. But it's coming up soon. Adam, thank you so much indeed for taking time out of your incredibly busy schedule. We appreciate it.

There you go. You know, there are similarities between you and Adam. There's a kind of tenaciousness to him, and you can tell that he was irritated that the platform wasn't quite working for him at the beginning and he cracked it, and he really has. So he's leading the way on that and we were very grateful that he stepped forward for us.

Mark Dawson: I'm glad you said that and not hair loss.

James Blatch: Well, do you know ...

Mark Dawson: Lack of hair. That's another thing, and beards. Has he still got his beard? It's not as fine as mine.

James Blatch: He's moving house as we speak, so I imagine he probably hasn't shaved for days. He's probably learning a whole new vocabulary to go into his books of profanities.

I wasn't going to say anything as rude as to draw attention to the fact that you are both follicle-y challenged. I think when I turned my camera on today, I noticed that I'm also starting to go that way.

Mark Dawson: Stress, that's what it is. Well I look like Father Christmas at the moment and I just realized I've been stroking my beard all the way through this.

People on YouTube may have noticed that I look like a Bond villain stroking. I don't know. Yeah, terrible.

Once we get out of this course, I always do this when we're in the middle of courses and launches and putting things together. Everything else goes by the wayside. Personal hygiene, relationships with your family.

James Blatch: Personal hygiene. That's why we're recording remotely.

Mark Dawson: Exactly, yeah. I'm in my hermetically sealed office, which is best for everyone concerned.

James Blatch: I noticed that exactly the same thing, that things go by the wayside. Also when you're outside of the work environment, you become slightly vacant and your family can't pick up on this of you staring off into the middle distance. I left my heating on in this office last night. It was

literally knocking on 100 degrees Fahrenheit when I got in here this morning.

Mark Dawson: Was it really knocking on 100 degrees Fahrenheit?

James Blatch: It was knocking on 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Not 100 degrees Celsius. That would obviously be crazy. But 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Mark Dawson: Goodness me.

James Blatch: I think it was probably more than that actually. It was ridiculous, yeah.

Mark Dawson: It's like a sauna.

James Blatch: It was exactly like a sauna. I can't have the doors open very wide because the garden's being done at the moment and there's people out there with angle grinders cutting into slate. I have asked them to be quiet for 10 minutes while we do this.

Mark Dawson: First-world problems with your host, James Blatch.

James Blatch: I'm trying to make other people feel good about their lives. Look, that's it.

Let me just remind you that the PDF you can get from Adam Croft if you visit SelfPublishingFormula.com/BookBubAds. The Advertising for Authors course, Mark Dawson's premium course Advertising for Authors, which includes from memory, YouTube ads for authors, and will include BookBub ads for authors this time around. Adding messenger bots for authors in the future.

Mark Dawson: Amazon ads, Facebook ads.

James Blatch: Yes, Amazon ads, AMS ads.

Mark Dawson: Copywriting, images.

James Blatch: How to write better simple ads. Bonus modules from Brian.

We should say, I don't think we've mentioned this so far that we've been constantly reviewing Twitter. Twitter's been the disappointing platform I think commercially for everyone, not just for our sphere and I'm reading a lot about that.

So we found a way of just about making adverts work, but it was a stretch of few. A few authors got them working and I just about did. I'm really concentrating on it, but then they made some changes and that became almost impossible.

Then we moved to an organic recommendation and how to use it. Ian Sutherland did us a bonus module, it was very good. Then Twitter made some more changes to make that more difficult.

Now we are saying is our official SPF advice at the moment, you can use Twitter to get yourself a bit of visibility, but don't put any stock in it. Don't spend a lot of time, certainly don't spend any money investing in Twitter at the moment because it's not going to give you a profitable return. We've withdrawn our Twitter module from that.

The platform may develop in the future, and we obviously keep watching brief on it, but I sense, and I've said this now, probably been saying this for a year, that I think the Twitter ads platform is an uncertain place. I don't think they know quite what they do.

Mark Dawson: Twitter is basically the market leader in harassment, sexual harassment, hate speech, sexual harassment. You can't beat it for that. Anyway.

James Blatch: They've carved out a niche, yeah. Not a particularly profitable niche for us.

Mark Dawson: Not for us, exactly. Well done, Twitter.

James Blatch: Twitter's going to come out and everything else is in, and the course is being loaded up. Anyway, so that's it for us. Thank you so much indeed, Mark in Salisbury.

I will go back to finishing off the BookBub ads course to make sure that's out and ready for our new users. November 8th, the course, and we will be back next Friday.

We're a little bit afflux at the moment just to what we're going to do for the next couple of weeks on the podcast. We got some really good interviews and they're all vying for a place. But within the next few weeks, certainly will be Hugh Howey, who's a big name, well known name in this area. Bit of an inspirational guy, I think to you personally, Mark.

Mark Dawson: Hugh Howey.

James Blatch: That's what I said. I think you can't hear me very clearly.

Mark Dawson: Oh, sorry. No, no.

James Blatch: We do have some communication issues. They'll be sorted by the time you listen to this. We record things locally.

But yeah, Hugh Howey is a big interview coming up soon and it's a really good one. Not quite sure exactly where we're going to drop that in yet, but it's going to be soon. That's to look forward to.

Thank you very much indeed for joining us. Have a great week writing, and a brilliant week selling. We'll see you next week.

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