

## PODCAST 13: HOW TO LAUNCH A BOOK, THE INSIDE STORY OF A BESTSELLER LAUNCH – MARK DAWSON

James: This podcast is brought to you by the Self Publishing Formulas Facebook Ads for Authors premium course. Registration opens on the 3rd of June for a limited time. To join the waiting list and to get a free master class on using Facebook ads to increase your author mailing list, you can visit [selfpublishingformula.com](http://selfpublishingformula.com). Hello, and welcome to episode 13 from the Self Publishing Formula podcast.

Speaker 2: Two writers, one just starting out. The other a best seller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James: Yes, lucky 13. Here we are, James Blatch, Mark Dawson for the Self Publishing Formula podcast, on what is a lovely, sunny day here in the UK. It's so sunny and lovely that I can tell you somebody is mowing their lawn quite close to where I am. You might be able to hear murmbling in the background, it's not my stomach. Can you hear it?

Mark: Yeah.

James: Just a little bit. Okay. Is it all nice and peaceful? You've just got birdsong in Salisbury, where you are?

Mark: We don't have people doing unsocial things like mowing their lawns, it's all very rustic and rural here. Might hear a tractor got past, possibly.

James: It is a weekday. In Germany, it's illegal to mow your lawn on a Sunday. At least it used to be, I don't know if it still is. Perhaps one of our German listeners could let us know, but I quite like that, have to say.

Anyway, stop rambling James. We have a reputation, I've noticed from feedback, of being quite forthright and perfunctory in the way that we do our podcasts which a lot of people appreciate. We get straight into the good stuff, rather than lots of rambling, so we should probably stick to that. This is going to be no exception.

We are going to get onto the subject of how to launch a book with a detailed look through Mark's very recent launch. Before we get onto that, Mark, just going to mention a couple of other things.

We're going to hear from one of the Self Publishing Formula course's students next week, a guy called Adam Croft. We've mentioned Croft a few times, he's had a absolutely fantastic year. I mean, I'll just give you a headline figure. He's gone from probably an annual income of 12 to £14,000, so knocking on the door of \$20,000, not bad. With his wife working as a primary school teacher, and he's basically been paying bills. This year he is predicted to gross a £1,000,000 and that's not an exaggeration. That's after he took the Facebook advertising course and really understood the power of Facebook ads, so a fantastic interview with him coming up. We're going to trail ahead because Mark is securing Adam's services, we hope, for a live webinar. I think, you Mark and Adam together, talking about how to use Facebook ads could be one of the most powerful and valuable webinars people are going to hear in 2016.

Mark: No pressure.

James: No.

Mark: It could be. Adam's done amazingly well, and it's quite likely he'll teach. In fact, he has taught me a few things about how he's gone about having that incredible year, some really cool things that he's done that I think we'll be able to share with listeners. We're just in the process of setting that up now, so there'll be an email that will go out with links to the

webinar, but I would advise, when we do get that ready that people jump on quickly because I think that will probably be quite full.

James: Yeah, and it's going to be great. We've even noticed this week that Adam's been outselling Robert Galbraith, who is of course, you might know, J.K. Rowling. It's a pretty good thing to see, your book higher in the charts than J.K. Rowling. Very excited about that, and also just want to mention that Mark, you were live on Friday night, I was watching you. I had a beer in hand, I noticed you had a beer as well. You didn't have your gin and tonic as usual. That's a Facebook live Q & A, which people can get through the Self Publishing Formula Facebook page. It went really well, it was so busy.

Mark: Yeah, it was really busy. Again, for the second time, it was over an hour long and lots of people stuck around for the whole hour. I don't know how many questions I answered, but it was certainly three figures worth. Really fun. It's nice to be able to do that, there's no cost, anyone can kind of turn up, ask me a question, tell me I'm an idiot if they want to. No, it's been very, very entertaining and I think I've managed to give some useful information, at least I hope I have, to people who were there to listen in to what I had to say.

James: Now this week, also, we're going to be interviewing BookBub, which I know is a very hotly anticipated podcast. We haven't got a release date for it yet, but we've got a lot of your questions all ready to go on that, and that's going to be one coming up in the future.

Okay, let's, in a perfunctory manner, get straight on to our hot topic, which is how to launch a book. Now, Mark, I have to say, you've become from a student of radio, you very quickly seem to have adopted and perfected the style. I was very, very impressed with the fact that you recorded this diary, effectively, a day-by-day diary of how your launch went.

It's really, really interesting. I was editing it and I was learning loads listening to your approach and looking at the figures and how you schedule things out. I think without further ado, we're going to go into this. It's probably about twenty minutes long, something like that, perhaps a little shorter. It's really, really useful.

We're going to listen to it now, and then Mark and I will pick up from the last diary entry that Mark made at the end of it, and go through the latest on the launch and I shall be quizzing you a little bit more about that.

Mark: It is

Wednesday the 27th of April, 2016

It's 2:50, and I've just finished the polished first draft of the new John Milton book, which is going to be called *The Jungle*. I've just sent it over to Canada, where my proofreader lives. She's a lady called Pauline, and she's going to be giving the manuscript a quick pass to clear up the obvious errors before I send it out to my beta team.

I'm hoping to get it back after the weekend on Monday, so that's when the books should go out to the beta team, some time probably close of play on Monday, once I've had a chance to look through Pauline's changes and make a few tweaks. I'm adding a couple of paragraphs, a couple of scenes I just want to add in subsequently sending it over to her. They'll get it on Monday, so that will be the next stage in the process, but it starts today. Day one is Wednesday the 27th of April, and I've just pressed send, so I'll be back on Monday to tell you what's next.

Okay, so it's Tuesday, 3rd of April

Day six in this launch campaign. I've received the manuscript back from my proof editor and I've gone through it, amended, accepted for the changes that have been suggested to me. Made a few extra tweaks, added a new opening paragraph that I'm quite pleased with.

I've just composed the MailChimp email sending to my advance team. At the time of this recording, there are 728 people on the advance team and they're going to get the formatted book in whatever format they want so, MOBI, ePub, or pdf. I'm giving it to them by way of a MailChimp hosted link, so the file hosted by MailChimp and clickable by people when they get the email.

Also with BookFunnel, the service that I recommend when it comes to allowing downloading of the three books that we give away in exchange for email addresses. That all being said, the email is ready to go, I am keen to get this off so I'm going to press send and I'll come back again tomorrow and let you know how it's gone.

It's day seven, Wednesday the 4th of April

I sent the manuscript out to the advance team last night or last afternoon. As I said, 728 members so that it got sent that many times. The open rate was 74% and click rate was 53%.

That's largely what I'd expect given how the team has reacted to previous campaigns. What I have done this morning is just go back through MailChimp and created a new segment of people of haven't opened any of the last five campaigns, and I've assumed that they're not interested anymore, so I've deleted them from the advance team. I may or may not look to recruit some new ones. I took off about 50 I think, so we're under 700 now, about 660, 670 left, which let's be honest, is still plenty, but I may look to add a few more to bring that up to 700 again.

The numbers, the open rate and the click rate was very good. Overnight I've had the first, I think, four or five comments back or emails back. Two or three of them have actually read the book and have said very nice things which is great for my ego, of course. The others have come back with some small points that have slipped through the proofing process so far.

What I do is, I put them into their own folder and I collate them and then I go back and do everything in one blast a bit nearer the end of the process. I'm very pleased with how things have gone. I'm always nervous when I send out a book for the first time because at this point, only one other person, the proofreader, has read the book and although she said that she enjoyed it, you kind of think you're saying that because we have a commercial relationship. But these readers will tell me if they don't like what I've done with the Milton. The early feedback so far has been good, so that is, of course, a big relief. That's cool, I kind of let that run now for a few more days and I'll check back in later with an update.

It's day 13, Thursday the 12th of May

I had the copyedited manuscript come back today, a day early from my copyeditor in Canada. I've spent most of today going through those changes. Usually it's straight forward, nothing controversial. I agree almost always with the vast majority of the changes. That has been great. I've also taken the opportunity to, I've paused and kind of marinated on the manuscript until now.

I've been receiving lots and lots of comments back from my advance readers. I haven't counted it up exactly but it's something like 50 or 60 emails have come back from the team with suggestions. More than 50 or 60 have responded. Some just saying, they've really enjoyed the book, looking forward to be able to help out, but the 50 or 60 that actually have suggestions and amendments to make, so I've been storing those up in a separate folder. I haven't touched the actual manuscript. I'm working in Word now. I haven't touched it because I wanted to make sure that the copy edit came back. I'll then work from that document alone, the copy edited document.

Now that I've got that back, I'm spending the day going through the manuscript and looking at those comments and amendments from readers. They've been really, really great. They solved a problem that was giving me practical problems towards the end of the book where Milton

needing to cause a big explosion. I've had some really clever ideas for that, some things I hadn't come up with myself, so that's been fantastic.

I always love doing this, it's my favorite part of the process, going through and editing. I think the manuscript is now very tight and strong. So much so, that it's possible that I'll be slightly ahead of schedule. I might even launch the book a day or two early. I was scheduling the 20th of May, a Friday. It might be that I come forwards to the 18th or 19th, but we'll see. I'm going to spend the rest of the day going through these comments. Then I'll check back in tomorrow because I'm going to start the promotion to my list and my Facebook feed.

Saturday, the 14th of May

It's a lovely day here in sunny Wiltshire. Just taking my son for a walk down the country lane near our house. I thought I'd check in with another report. Yesterday was a really good day. I sent out emails to all of my mailing list with a cover reveal and also I chucked in the first, sneak peak to the prologue of the new book.

I amplified that by doing the same on Facebook, so I put the cover up and the prologue and put that in on my Facebook page and I had a really, really positive response. Got dozens and dozens of emails from readers, which was excellent. Most people saying that they were looking forward to buying the book when it comes out. I put pre-order links in the email for Apple, Barnes & Noble and Kobo. I made it really clear why I wasn't pre-ordering through Amazon.

People have different views on this but it doesn't help my launch strategy because of the way that Amazon tallies up pre-orders. In my opinion, it reduces the effect a launch, but even though I made that pretty clear, and in fact, the explanation of why there were no Amazon pre-orders was in bold, I got quite a lot, maybe 30 emails from readers saying they'd been onto Amazon and haven't been able to find the pre-order. On the one hand that's quite flattering because they are motivated to go and look for it. On the other hand, it's a little frustrating.

I made it pretty clear why that was, and of course, I answered all of those emails individually, and told them just to hang around until next week when they'd be able to get it. That's a learning for me for next time, I'll be bit

more explicit, I may even not put any links on when I do those kinds of teasers. Anyway, so it was great.

The Facebook post was extensively shared, 200 or 300 likes, lots and lots of comments. Everything pointing towards a positive launch next week. Quite likely now to be pushed forward a bit because I'm ahead of schedule, but we'll see. I'll close down for the weekend now, spend some time with the family. Then I'll look forward to getting ready too push this new book out next week.

It's Monday the 16th

I'm in one of my cafes in Salisbury that I come to to do my writing. I've spent the last hour just going through the final amendments that I want to make to the manuscript. Just a minute ago, I saved it again as a new file, appending the word lot to it, which means for me that that book is pretty much done.

I've emailed it across together with the cover to Polgarus Studios, the formatters that I use in Australia, a guy called Jason over there, very very highly recommended. He will do the formatting magic and send that back to me, probably tomorrow. Then we can get the book loaded up to the relevant platforms, and we're good to go to start sending it out the advance team. Actually getting into the launch phase of this launch. That's it for me for today. I've got that done. I'm really looking forward to moving onto the next stage tomorrow.

It's Wednesday the 18th at 6:23pm

I'm just running the bath for the children, you might hear the water running in the background. I just wanted to check in and tell you that the first part of the soft launch or the soft launch really has gone really, really well. In the just over 48 hours since I've had the book live on both Amazon, in fact, all Amazons, I've had over 100 reviews on .com I think about 25 reviews on .co.uk. Something like 5 and 6 or 10 or 11 on Canada and Australia, which is really excellent. I mean, a 100 reviews in the first couple of days, that's ridiculous.



They're all really good, honest reviews. Most of them or a good number of them have left the statement that the book was in ARC, an advanced copy. I always put that on the email, so just remind them that it's best practice to put that in. They've been honest. Not everyone liked it, there's a few less enthusiastic reviews, which is completely fine, but generally speaking, it's been very, very positive. The book's page which did look a little bit bare and lonely when the book went live, now looks busy. The blurb looks good. The cover looks good. We've got all that social proof on the review, so that's mission accomplished in terms of the soft launch.

Also had about 200 buys and I think that's pushed the book up to around about 1,800 in the store, so that's a good platform that we'll be building on when we do the proper launch, which is likely to be tomorrow, I think. I've got a call with Apple this evening, the guys in Cupertino to have a chat about some promotion that they're going to be doing as the book launches. It's just looking really good. I'm very pleased with how things have gone so far. I'll check back in maybe a couple of times tomorrow if we do the launch tomorrow so I can tell you what I do when the book actually fires out to the mailing list and then the early results.

It's the 19th of May, 2016 at 12:45

I've been busy this morning just putting the final touches to my launch emails. I've just pushed click and send on the last one. Right now, around about 50,000 emails are either queued at MailChimp HQ or on their way to the people on my mailing list. This is one of the most exciting parts of the launch. It's been soft launch for a couple of days, but now I'm telling everyone on my mailing list that the book is out there, and encouraging them to go and buy it, to share the email, get their friends and family to buy it. I will see how we do.

The price is up now to its launch price, 4.99 in the US, 3.99 in the UK. US rank is at the time of recording is 3,749 in the store, and that's off the back of 247 sales over the last three days. Most of those will be at 99 cents, a few of those are at 4.99.

I saw overnight that a few people in my Facebook group had seen that the book had gone live, it's been soft launch so far, so I haven't told anybody officially. But a few had noticed and the word spread, so today was definitely the right day to do the start of the sales sequence. By now, we've got 107 reviews on the US page, and that's all going to be from the launch being really good. I'm very pleased with that. It's 92% 5 star, 8% at 4 star. We'll get lots more coming in now at 3,2 and 1 and I'm completely fine with that.

I like to see a nice spread of reviews on a page. I'm quite happy to get honest reviews from all the readers, advance readers or not, depending on how they like the book and being honest, and telling other readers about it. That will give a bit more balance to the page. Right now, I'm very pleased with that as a platform for the book to go out. I will check back in a bit later to let you know how the emails have been going down, but as of right now, I'm pretty excited.

It is Friday the 20th of May. It's 3:13 in the afternoon  
I thought I'd check back in with results of how the first day of the launch went. The quick answer is, it went really, really well. It was the most successful launch that I've ever done.

The best one I've done previously I think was up to about 102 in the .com store. But The Jungle yesterday sold 1,637 copies in the US, and 809 copies in the UK. That was good for an overnight rank in the US of number 80 in the store, and 49 in the UK store. I'm really pleased with that.

My unofficial aim was to crack the top 100 with this launch, and I've managed to do that. Very, very pleased with how it went. That's just on the basis of mailing list sales, so I've had a very, very good response from the mailing list. Good open rates, good click rates, and loads, and loads, and loads of emails and Facebook messages from readers getting in touch with me to tell me that they'd bought the book and that they'd either finished it and left a review or they were enjoying it or they were about to start it.

Really good for the ego and obviously I've replied to all of those. That's been really gratifying.

What I've been doing today is, I'm starting to amplify the affect of that burst of sales yesterday. I'm doing that in two ways, the first way is with Facebook ads So what I've done, and this, I suppose, is about as clever as it gets from me, is I've uploaded my mailing list, so around about 50,000 people. I've pulled those out as a spreadsheet, uploaded them into Facebook and then told Facebook that I wanted to serve ads just to those people. I think the number of people on that list who had Facebook accounts was around about 29,000. I'm now serving ads, very simple ads with the graphic from or the cover from The Jungle with a little bit of the blurb, and just saying that it's on it's launch price of 4.99 for the next few days, and I'm sending those out.

The reason I do that is because although my open rates are typically pretty good, 30 or 40% open rate, which is well above industry average, that's still leaving 60% of people who aren't getting or aren't opening those emails. That might be because they just don't open those kinds of emails. It might be because they've gone into spam or they've gone into promotions, if they're on Gmail. What this does is, just gives me another way to reach them. Maybe they're more open to receiving that kind of notification by way of something in their news feed on Facebook. There's that.

There's also a benefit in repeating a message. So let's say, for example, I received an email from a writer yesterday, I saw it whilst I was in a queue, and I got to the end of the queue, and by that time I was distracted, wasn't able to make the purchase of the book that perhaps I would have done. It's useful in that case to just reinforce that message, and give them a second chance to buy.

Then there's also, the advertising theory of seven touches, which suggests that you need to see something sometimes up to seven times before you're put into the mood to buy something. This is just another touch which I can

amplify with Facebook live video. I've been doing a lot of that over the last two or three days. It's great for organic reach with mailing list, ShoutOut. Then with that, Amazon gets involved. The book will start to appear in also boughts. Amazon will start to email that now to my fans, and Bookbub ads or BookBub's new launch emails. There's loads and loads of ways you can amplify that message. Facebook ads are a really, really good one. I'll be checking in to see how affective those ads have been.

I would suspect going on past experience that the return on those would be between 50 and 100%. In terms of the cost of advertising, I think I've spent about \$150 yesterday and I'll spend about the same today. I'd expect to almost double that, I would have thought, in terms of sales, perhaps a bit more than that. Of course, every one of those sales is helping to maintain that rank for a little bit longer. As I record this right now, I'm still in the top 100, at number 99 in the States. That'll start to drift down now, but it will be in the top few 100 for a while yet, for two or three days I would expect, perhaps a bit longer than that.

Anyway, just to sum up. It's been a really good launch. When you've looked back at it, it is pretty busy. There's lots of things to do. Lots of moving parts to keep an eye on, but I am very pleased with how it's worked out. It's the best launch I've had.

I will be gathering some information on sales on other platforms. I think I've had quite a few sales on Apple. A good number, like 150 or so on Kobo. I would expect a similar number plus a bit more on Barnes & Noble. It's still quite possible that I've had enough sales to hit a list, but of course, we'll see and I'll let you know.

James: There we go, radio reporter Mark Dawson. Did it feel like you're sort of a radio reporter?

Mark: I've had a good teacher, James.

James: You have. I have one bit of technical feedback for you, which I forgot to tell you.

Mark: Right.

James: I can tell you now because I know lots of people are interested in podcasts. Not everybody has spent 15 years in radio like I did before, but you recorded a couple of your bits in a very noisy environment in which case you need to speak really loudly into the microphone. You did a combination of a noisy environment in a quite quiet voice, so I had to work, and we have a technical guy who's going to work on that as well to try make sure it's listenable to. With that one small piece of negative feedback, apart from that, I think you did extremely well. You might get a job on Radio Blatch when I start the station.

Mark: It's was fun. It was good fun to do. I've been meaning to do something like that for a little while, so it was quite nice to get my thoughts down whilst they were fresh.

James: Okay, we should time stamp this. We don't normally do that because obviously this goes out a little later, but it is currently, my Apple Watch has suddenly decided to give a notification, it's the 23rd of May. Where are you now in terms of totting up sales?

Mark: Let's have a little look. In total sales, you know it went very, very well. My aim, unofficially, I didn't push this about too much, I didn't want to set myself up for a fall, but I wanted to hit the top 100 in Amazon US, haven't done it before. I got 102 with a previous book.

As I mentioned in, well I don't think I did actually mentioned this because this was subsequent to the last podcast or the last diary entry, but it got up to number 80 overall in the US, which was great.

It got to number 49 in the UK, so it hit the top 50, and it's still going quite strong, so it's still within the top 250 in the US. I'm not sure in the UK, but I think it'll be within the top 150.

In terms of total sales, it sold 2,507 copies in the US. 1,228 copies in the UK. 1,100 on Apple. 156 on Barnes & Noble. The Apple one was cool, it was number 2 in the whole world for a little bit a day or two after release. I had so many screen grabs with that at number 2 in the world, which was pretty amazing.

James: Yeah, that's really good. I know you have a great relationship with Apple. I'm starting to see why they like you so much, that's really good. Just remind us of the cover price.

Mark: I was just thinking about that, how much it's actually grossed, but it was 4.99, so 70% of that.

James: We'll get a calculator out.

Mark: I'm sure we can. 3000, 37, 48, it's about 5000ish copy sold, so \$17,000 to me in terms of the 70% royalty. That's pretty good for a week's work.

James: Well, a little more than a week's work.

Mark: More than that maybe, yes, yes, but in terms of the launch itself.

James: It was very interesting to hear how the launch went. I can see potentially, at some point, a future module maybe on one of our courses on this very specific subject because you have choices. The formula you've got to has not been something you dreamt up three weeks ago, you've plowed your way through your series. Every time you do it, every time you got through a launch, obviously you're perhaps looking to excel what you've done before.

Do you learn something new? Do you think about fine tuning it for next time?

Mark: I'm always thinking about what works and what didn't work last time. This time, one thing, I did one thing that I amplified from the last time and then I've done a new thing this time that worked well.

The thing that I did last time, for the first time, which I've spent a bit more money on in terms of this launch, was advertising on Facebook, for the actual launch itself. What I did was, I upload my mailing list, so it's around about 50,000 strong now, so I upload that into Facebook. I think around about 30,000 of them have a Facebook profile, so I build the custom audience of those 30,000 people. Then I add into that people on my Facebook page, so there's about another 20,000 on my Facebook page who've liked the page. Then I advertise to them at the same time, as I send out the mailing list emails, and the reason I do it like that is, there's a few reasons really.

Some of those emails won't get opened. It's just a fairly standard situation with email marketing in that if you're getting over 35, 40% open rate, you're doing quite well, but that means that 60% of the people who get the email, or who are sent the email don't ever see it, don't open it, it could go to spam. They might not open it for another reason, whatever. Your message isn't getting over to them. I can reach them through other means. Facebook ads directly into their news feed is a very good way of doing that. That's number one.

James: I think just to dwell on that for a second because I think some people potentially will think that that's the end of it. You know, if 7 out of 10 people haven't opened it, they'll think, well you've seen the email, they're not interested and leave them.

Actually, traditional marketing analysis will tell you, and I don't like to use this expression, but it's an expression that gets used, is that they're actually

low hanging fruit. They're people who are already familiar with the product, who've made a decision to be on your list, and you should not be negative about them. Finding out that rather inventive way of using them, which is then to slip the advert into their Facebook feed, is a perfect example of how well to out leverage that.

Mark: Exactly. You can get to them in another way as well. I mean, one thing I always do, maybe a week or two weeks after launch, is to send another email out, but just send it to the unopeners and change the headline. Sometimes it's the headline that triggers spam filters. It's good to try a variation on that. I'll do that. I'll usually add another 10% who'll open that one, and then maybe 50% of them will buy the book. So you can continue to advertise to them.

The Facebook point, apart from covering those people who don't open the email, there's no bad thing in sending a repeat message to someone who would be interested in buying because when they open the email, for example, or the other way around, when they see the Facebook message, they might not be in a position physically to be able to buy something. Perhaps they are, just at a queue, or are lying in the States waiting to pay for something, then they get to the front and they're distracted by doing what they were waiting to do, so they forget that they were going to buy the book. Maybe it was bad time, they weren't prepared to make the purchase at that time. We go back to that whole seven touches of advertising theory that it can take up to seven touches before someone is put into the place, the kind of mental space where they're ready to make a purchase. With a mailing list email, with Facebook, with Facebook normal messages, videos that I've done, I can amplify my message extensively and get it into people's consciousness that there's a new book that they'll probably like, ready for them to buy.

James: Did anything go wrong with your launch this time?



Mark: It did actually, yes. This happened to me once before and writers listening will be familiar with this. Amazon has started to crack down on reviews that it thinks are, illegitimate is the wrong word for sure, but Amazon has some kind of algorithmic process whereby they believe they can detect relationships between reviewers on the one hand and writer on the other hand.

When would I launched to my team, my soft launch, to get reviews, I mentioned in the diary that I had over a 100 reviews within the first 36 hours or so. Then I checked in just before I went to hard launch, or possibly just after, I can't remember exactly when it was, and that number had been culled down to 70, so around about 40 had been taken off.

That did happen to me before with the last launch, but they all came back again quite quickly. This time, they haven't come back, which on the one hand, well actually there's isn't a question of it being on the one hand, it is just quite annoying. Because there's no relationship between me and those reviewers, apart from the fact that they are on my advance team. I mean, I don't know them, they're not related to me. We're friends in the sense that I value them as part of my team, and brilliant. It isn't as if there's anything wrong about doing things that way, it's something that traditional publishers do all the time, sending out advance copies.

Indies have been doing it now for two or three years. It just seems right now to me that Indies are bearing the brunt of some kind of skeezy behavior that other less reputable authors and marketers are getting into with regards to fake reviews. Annoying.

Was it a massive problem? No, because I had enough reviews to cover off that situation. It's not pleasing to me when the effort that some of my advance readers have gone into is just removed for what can only, really, I can only see is an arbitrary reason.

James: In terms of what else you did alongside the main points that you've talked about in the launch, where there parallel marketing exercises that you embarked on?

Mark: Before we move onto that, I forgot to mention the numbers for the Facebook ad campaign. I'm pretty open on what I spend and what I make. I think it would be useful for people to see how profitable that campaign was. I'm still running it, but I've got two days worth of data to share right now.

Those first two days are the day of launch, and then I think it was the Saturday, I spent \$260.09 on that campaign, and made \$562.37. That's a return on investment of a 116%, so that's absolutely not to be sniffed at. The conversion percentage on those campaigns were as high as 50% sometimes.

James: What period was that over?

Mark: That was just two days. It was the first day and the second day. I'm spending, well you can see, just over a \$100 a day at the moment on those ads.

The other thing I tried for the first time, which I hadn't done before, was to have a launch party. Facebook live video has been rolled out extensively now, so I've always had it on my page, obviously we've got it on the SPF page now, which is the facility that we use for our Friday night chats. I speak quite regularly on video to my author page, the fans on that page. I did something in advance where I scheduled Saturday at 10:00pm UK time, 5:00pm Eastern, to do what I called a launch party. I advertised that in advance. I did plenty of other videos to get really high organic reach, just to tell people that I would be there to answer questions. Also to do a giveaway. I gave away, I don't know if you were there when this happened James, but when I was at the London Book Fair, Amazon gave me a Kindle to sign.

James: I saw the picture of you about to deface a Kindle with a pen. I assumed it was, just someone had made a mistake in terms of setting up up the photograph, but this was a real thing, was it?

Mark: Yeah, it was. It wasn't a pen, I think they would call it a Dremel machine or something like that. Basically, it was like a dentist's drill. I engraved onto the back of this Kindle my name, basically ruined it. I offered that as a giveaway, as a competition giveaway.

It was pretty simple to enter. You just had buy a book and email, I think it was the first word of the 40th chapter. Something that you would only be able to find out if you had a copy of the book, so that's encouraging sales in itself. I was there for an hour on Saturday night, with a beer and answered questions from readers. Apart from the fact that it was really enjoyable, it was kind of like bathing in good wishes, because everyone there was a reader, was a fan of my stuff. They were saying some very nice things. That was very pleasant, but in practical, commercial terms, I think it was nearly 13,000 unique viewers turned up over the course of that hour. They were getting to know about the new book. Forging a deeper connection with me, which is great, I'm all for that. Then, because of the fact that it had really, really organic reach, lots of comments, lots of shares, lots of likes and all that kind of stuff, the organic reach on it was 206,000 people, so that's significant. If you sat down and worked out how much that would cost as a media buy, you're looking at 20 or £30,000, I would have estimated.

James: Just think about how it would have cost on a book tour to reach 200,000 of your readers.

Mark: Yeah, exactly.

James: How much of a faff that would have been?

Mark: Yeah, exactly. I did it all from my desk, so it was a resounding success. I don't know how many I sold then. Even if I sold none, I would

have been quite happy to just have been around to just answer reader questions, because you know, I got some lovely comments. It's much more likely that those people will stick around for the long haul now, and buy other books that I put out.

James: That sounds really good.

You're generally happy then with the way the launch went? You must be particularly getting so high in the US charts on Apple?

Mark: I'm really thrilled about it. Today, you'll see it's not finished yet either, so Apple are tweeting out something about the book, I think at about 5:00 UK time. That's going out to an audience of about 2,500,000 so you know, that's not something that's available to everyone, but it is something I said in, I think, the Friday night session, the value of reaching out to and making personal contacts with retailers, very important.

James: I think it's also down to the fact of how hard you work and how focused you are on marketing, because if I was Apple, it's not simply somebody who writes a good book and it's going to sell well, they're also looking for individuals who've got it. Who understand that marketing is a slog, and that you work hard, and you work smart. They like you for that. They like you because they know that you're doing your bit and they're going to support you on that front.

I think that's very much something authors need to bear in mind, is to be very proactive. Is to think actively about how they're going to sell their books. What their marketing plan is. Then it's going to be easier to make those relationships, because you'll be doing the same thing, your complimenting each other then from Amazon and Apple and other sellers point of view.

Mark: Absolutely. Everyone wins when that kind of thing works well. It couldn't have gone too much better. I've taken some good information away from this launch, and I'll use that again when I launch ... I've actually got another launch next month, one that's on the Sam Mercer book, so that will be interesting because then we'll get the combined push from Amazon,

which obviously is very significant. If I was to fold that into this kind of campaign again, I mean, I'm very confident we'll do better than, certainly in the UK, I should think top 10 is a pretty reasonable target, so we'll see.

James: Okay. Onto the next book?

Mark: Yeah, which I've already started. I'm 10,000 words into the next one. There's no pausing.

James: No. Brilliant. Mark thank you so much indeed for doing that. Yes, my Padawan radio reporter's quickly becoming a master. As I said at the beginning, we are interviewing Adam Croft, definitely not one to miss for inspirational reasons and for valuable insight reasons. Adam's going to be a great interviewee for the next edition of the Self Publishing Formula podcast. There's going to be the webinar with Adam coming up. We'll give you more details about that as soon as we've firmed up those arrangements.

Don't forget, Mark you're going to be live again, beer in hand, on tonight, Friday night?

Mark: Friday night, yeah at 10:00pm UK, 5:00pm Eastern. I may change it up this time and go for a traditional G and T, just see what I feel like.

James: Just out of interest, what is your preferred gin?

Mark: My preferred gin? Probably Hendricks. My beer of choice at the moment Asahi There we are.

James: This podcast has not been brought to you by either Hendricks or Asahi but I guess we're probably open to offers in the future.

Mark: Absolutely.

James: Okay, thank you very much indeed. Thank you Mark. We will speak to you next week. Have a great week writing and selling. Bye.

Mark: Bye, bye.

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