

## PODCAST 15: HEADING FOR \$1.5 MILLION THANKS TOP FB ADS – WITH ADAM CROFT

James: This podcast is brought to you by the Self-Publishing Formula's, Facebook Advertising for Authors premium course. Registration opens on the 3rd of June [\[AVAILABLE NOW!\]](#) for a limited time. Hello, and welcome to podcast number 15, from the Self-Publishing Formula.

Announcement: 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: Number 15 in the list of Self-Publishing Formula podcasts. We hope it's going to be a very long list. It gets well into 3 maybe even 4 figures in the years to come. It's the exciting early days for us. Every single time we do a podcast, we put one together Mark, we always think, "How is this going to change a reader? How is this going to change a writer's life? How is this going to make things easier for them, better for them, give them value?" Today, we're delighted to say we've got an interview ... It's actually not a long interview. Fifteen minutes or so, with a student of Mark's premium course. A Facebook advertising for authors course, who talks about the year ... Well not even a year. The three months that he's had that has changed his life.

It's very exciting, and the reason we're talking to Adam Croft today is because you will by now know, I expect that Mark's courses, in one of it's periods of enrollment, to on board new students. It happens a couple of times a year. It's only the third time we've done this Mark. We're taking on a clutch of new students, and it's exciting.

Mark: We've already had lots and lots of people sign up. There is a limit on how many people we can take on the course. It's open for ... I think it's until ... What is it James?

James: It's about the 14th, but we do reserve the right to close it early. People should understand we're a small company. There's three of us. We have a couple of helpers dotted around the world to help us, but commercially we can't take on ten people and have them there the whole time, which would allow us to take on open-ended numbers of students, so we take on a number that we can support.

In the weeks to come, there is inevitably, an upsurge in support. That works really well for us as a company, so there's a reason for that, but I would expect us to go to about the 13th, 14th, around then. That's what we're planning to at the moment anyway.

Mark: Yes. If people are interested in that, then they should go to [selfpublishingformula.com](http://selfpublishingformula.com) for details of how they can sign up and what's included in the course, plus things like testimony, videos, and then listen to Adam's story, because he has had, as you said James, he's had a life changing year.

Going from making, I think, \$20,000 a year last year, to projecting \$1.5 million this year, and that is almost exclusively because he is completely nailing Facebook ads right now. He's doing this extremely well, and his story is an interesting one. I'd say just listen to that, and also, at the end of it, if you have other questions that you don't think were answer or other things you'd like to hear Adam's thoughts on, Adam and I are going to be doing a webinar on the 7th of June at 10pm London time, 5pm New York, 2pm LA, and you'll definitely need to register for that. We do expect it to be quite a hot ticket, and the software that we use through webinar only allows us to register a thousand people.

Definitely get on that as soon as you can. If you want to register, you go to [selfpublishingformula.com/adam](http://selfpublishingformula.com/adam), and then you'll get reminder emails from both the webinar and from me to remind you when we will be going live. That's going to be really interesting. Adam's got loads and loads of really good tips, and we hope to pass some of those along.

James: He's somebody who picked it up quickly. Really has made it work, and it's not just about the adverts and the composition of that. That would be loads of interesting bits that you'll take away from it, but it's also about the type of book you read and type of book you write, which he's been thinking about as well, in a commercial sense, as a writer. Not just as somebody who's perhaps setting out to win the Booker prize, but somebody setting out to make a business out of it.

We'll get to his interview now. I should say also that one of my jobs is SPF is to look out for students who've posted interesting comments or their results onto Facebook, and I immediately get on to them and arrange a little Skype interview, and so far, everyone's said yes. People are obviously all around the world. People like Riley Edgewood, who I think is in DC, and recently been speaking to John Logsdon in the past down in North Carolina, and Charlotte Byrd who's in South California. A couple of them recently.

Then I contacted Adam, and I said to him slightly wearily, "What timezone are you in Adam?" Thinking what time I going to be up, and he said, "Well I'm in Flitwick," which is about 20 miles away from where I'm sitting. Where I live, so I hot footed it down there, and for once on the podcast, spoke to somebody actually living and breathing in front of me.

Mark: Yeah. It makes a difference.

James: Well I've actually stepped out of self-publishing formula podcast HQ, that glittering building, and joined the real world. I guess it's a bit of a

fairly typical writer's situation, which is in your front room, and I'm with Adam Croft. Hello Adam.

Adam: Hello.

James: Thank you very much indeed for allowing us into your house, and chatting to you, and what we're very excited about is you have, in a fairly short period of time, become a bit of a star in the self-publishing world. Just tell us where your book is today on Amazon.

Adam: Today, when I looked this morning, it was number 16 on the overall chart in the UK, which is pretty amazing actually. I think the highest I've got to before then, just through purely organic means, was about 1,000, so yeah, it's pretty phenomenal.

James: This is your ninth book.

This has all happened with one of your books since December. Is that right?

Adam: It is. Yes. Yeah. I've been plodding away for five years, and had eight books out before that, and you know, they've done fine. I've been making a living from it, just about.

I had this idea for a book for quite a long time actually. I'd done parts of it, and I couldn't quite nail the ending, and I couldn't make things work, and I thought, "You know what. Is it worth it? For what I'm making out of it, is it worth just going on, or moving on to another one?"

I started doing the Facebook adverts course, and I thought, "You know what. That book idea that I very nearly binned, might just be marketable, and sellable through adverts." I finished it, and fired some ads at it, and yeah, the rest history.

James: You started seeing success early, and I know people always want to know about the detail of this because their learning themselves. Explain how you saw the success, and how you reacted to that.

Adam: Well pretty much immediately, within the first couple of days, I started to see that whatever I was spending on adverts was doubling in sales. I thought well logically, if I'm spending ten pounds, 20 pounds on adverts, and I'm doubling it, if that principal applies at higher levels, I'd rather double a thousand pounds than double ten pounds, so I start to scale up.

Quite slowly, and I tend to recommend, and most other people recommend, no more than 50% of the existing budget. If you're spending 10 pounds a day, and you raise it up to 15. If you're spending 50, only raise it 75. That's when you do that a couple of times a week at the most. Maybe three times a week. It's a case of very gradually scaling up, and then going, "Okay this is still working." Adding in some new audiences, and essentially spending what I possible can on it.

Even now, I've scaled up to the point where I'm spending a thousand pounds a day, and I'm still doubling what I'm spending. The only reason I'm not going any higher is because I'll have run out of money by the time royalty check comes in, which isn't great.

James: Yeah. That's the thing a lot of us are familiar with. When you do start selling book, there's quite a lag between selling the book on Amazon and actually seeing the cash.

Adam: There is. It's not too much of a problem once you're rolling and going and selling the same sorts of amounts each month. It doesn't make much difference. But when you've got such an enormous jump from ... I mean, I was selling about something like 20, 30 copies a day, and I'm not at the point where I'm selling four figures a day, there is that big lag.

Like say you've got that outlay on Facebook adverts. I mean Amazon might pay a couple of months late, that's not too much of a problem, but Facebook have a nasty habit of taking the money for the adverts the same day, so that when it starts to become a bit of a cash flow thing.

Which, again, is where your business mind has to come in. You keep saying all the time, if you ought to be successful, especially with self-publishing, you need to be not just a writer, not just have that creative side, but have that business, entrepreneurial side as well. Things about managing the cash flow and having the confidence as well, and actually seeing those results coming in. Looking at the sales throughout the day, throughout the week, and going, yeah, it's doubling it's money. I'm going to be getting this money in a month or two. I'm happy to put myself in quite considerable debt in the meantime.

James: We're talking 40 or 50 grand worth of debt. We're in the UK, as people can probably tell, that's pounds. Times that by 1.5 for dollars, you may have invested \$75,000 without seeing any return yet.

Adam: Well the return's there on paper, but in terms of actually being in my bank account, no. Yeah, a lot on credit cards and kind family members who've also looked at the results and gone, "Yeah. Okay. I don't mind having a piece of this." I'll have to scramble around.

When I'm at Amazon payday, if I like my first payday from this book, I want to be at the point where, as that money hits my account, my last penny went out the second before, because that means I've put everything I can towards it, and it's doubling everything I've got, essentially. Which is what I want to do. It makes sense, obviously. 100% ROI. If that's relative and it's scalable, which it has proven to be, then it just makes sense to spend as much as you can, then get as much as you can.

James: The old expression of make hay while the sun shines. Strike while the iron's hot. There's a whole load of very wise expressions that are not by accident about seizing the moment. Carpe diem. We could go on couldn't we. I was just thinking now. I just wonder if there's a market, or there's a way for crowdfunding a successful author in the early days. This is a significant issue.

You've got a few credit cards. Not everyone has space on credit cards. You've been lucky enough to have some family who've been invested. It would be frustrating in the extreme for you, wouldn't it, to have run out of money early on at this point.

Adam: Yes. In terms of actual money, I didn't really have any money really before I started. I fortunately had a good credit rating, and that's about it. A lot of writers, obviously, especially if you've been doing it for a while, you probably won't have a lot of money, and most of us don't. It is tricky. I did look at the idea of crowd funding, and I thought, you know, that was always my kind of back up plan if I really needed more. If I couldn't get the money from family. If I couldn't get it on the credit cards. I had thought about looking at something like crowd funding or business angels, and things like that, but the idea of actually giving a portion of my business was not something I was all that keen on. Especially seeing as it's such a volatile career anyway, and it's something that's changed so massively in the last couple of months.

Three months ago, I couldn't have foreseen where I am today, and if I had, I might've thought that'd be five, ten years down the line. At least. I don't know where I'm going to be in three months time. There could be film deals, and all sorts of things. You just don't know. It's such a quick changing thing.

To have been going for five years and eight books, and all of a sudden that ninth one just to go and take off. It's not something you can predict. It's a book that I had the confidence in, once I really got my hands around the

marketing side of things. I thought, you know if one book is going to go, it's going to be this one.

You've got to have that business mind, and you've got to have that confidence and be willing to take the plunge, really.

James: Just to put some of these, more flesh on the details, on this story since December. You're 17th in the overall Amazon chart today. Your sales prediction for this year ... If you look at the big growth figure. If you don't personally realize, because of course, it doesn't take into account the investment, advertising, and it doesn't take into account Amazon's cut. Nonetheless, it's the sales that you have generated, you're probably looking at seven figures this year.

Adam: Yeah. In terms of what it's done in the last two or three months, and projections for 2016, it's well on course. More than a million pounds worth of books.

James: 1.5 million dollars.

Adam: Yes. Which is just phenomenal considering in a year before that, I might have done 20 thousand pounds worth, or 30 thousand pounds worth, and that's now coming through in a fortnight, or a month, and it's insane really.

James: Well, let me say congratulations, Adam, to you. I know that's what a lot of the people listening to the podcast will be thinking. Well done you. Good on you. There's the motivation and reasons for us to continue. Let's get some top tips from a recently created master in this field. What would be your main tip for somebody who would love to follow in your footsteps?

Adam: I think you need to be honest with yourself. I advertised on Facebook for a couple of months before launching this book, and I was advertising different books from my back catalog, and some of them



worked okay. Some of them didn't work at all. It was when I actually managed to kind of get my head out of my own backside and think, "You know what. Maybe the problem isn't with advertising. Maybe the problem isn't with the market. Maybe it's the book that I'm advertising. It isn't quite right."

That's when I kind of thought, "You know what. Let's flip this on it's head. Rather than saying I'm going to write a book and then market it through Facebook advertising." I thought, "What's the reason. What's the hook they want?" That's when I remember that I had this book and I thought, "You know what. That's got a really good hook on it." I won't say I wrote it for the marketing purpose, but I had it there and I thought that was one that's really going to work.

My biggest tip, really, would be you can't be pressured. At some point you might have to say, "You know what. This isn't the right book to be advertising. It's not the right book to be marketing." You might have another book in your back catalog or an idea, or something, or you might even go the full hog and actually write one for the purposes of it being commercial.

The books now that I was trying to market beforehand on Facebook advertising, all the money I spent on advertising them, they're now selling more copies of those when I'm not advertising them, because of the sell-through from people who've read my most recent one, and then gone back and gone, "Oh look. This chaps written another eight books. Let's go and buy some of those."

I would say you've got to look at three prongs of it. Having a business approach, getting your advertising right as well, and actually looking at the product that you're selling. Even the best marketing in the world won't sell a bad product.

James: That's a really good point, and it's, I suppose, moving on to slightly advanced business and marketing theory, but it does happen all the time in switched on businesses. Rather than them sitting there thinking what is it we do and how do we market it, they look at how advertising works, how people work, and then they back design a product for that.

I know even electronics companies will do that. They'll sit there thinking, "What's going to look good on a poster in the underground? Can we now, in the subway, can we now design that product?" That's effectively what you've done to an extent. You've looked at what works well in advertising and then gone backwards. A tail wagging dog.

Adam: Yes. I went a step further for my next book. The one that I'm writing at the moment. The first thing I wrote, before I even had a title, before I really fleshed out the plot, the first thing I wrote was the Facebook advert for it. Then try and distill the plot down into a good advert, and thought, "Yeah. That's another book that will sell." Then gone back and fleshed out the book and the plot from there.

It is a case of sometimes having to think outside the box. I know as writers we're very keen on going, "I've got a great idea for a story. Let me go write it." We write it, then we go, "Right. What do we do with it now?"

You have to remember that, especially if you're self-publishing, it's a business. You've got to think of the customer that's the reader. You have to, essentially, give them what they want. Especially in genre fiction, that's what it's set up for. That's what crime, and romance, and erotica, and all of that, are set up for. We're not out there to write literary masterpieces that we're eventually proud of but no one is going to buy. We're there selling a product, and that's what the books are. Again, it's that thing of having to get my head out of my backside and realize that it's not about being a literary master. It's about actually having that product and selling it.

James: It reminds me a bit of Alan Partridge. The caricature English comedian, played by Steve Coogan, who's a failed TV presenter. Pitches a

load of idea, and one of them is a partridge among the pigeons, and the worried producer says, "Well what is that?" He goes, "I don't know. It's just a title, but I'm sure it could do something."

Adam: Youth Hostelling with Chris Eubank. I remember that one.

James: Yeah. Exactly. Cooking in prison. Yeah, so the Americans have no idea what we're talking about now.

The point is, I suppose, you could come up with a great film poster, and a great tagline for a film, and then write the script.

Adam: Yeah. That's what I've been trying to do more and more. Rather than writing my book and then going, "Right. Let's find the hook. Let's get the tagline out of this. Let's find out how it's going to sell." It's to do it the other way around.

At the end of the day, as much as I love writing, I'm doing it for a reason. That's because it's my job. That's because it's what I want to do. It's what I love doing. It needs to pay the mortgage. It needs to pay the bills. For that reason, you've got to sell books. Not all of us are Lord Byron. We can just keep writing things and having the money coming in from elsewhere. We've got to make a living out of it as well.

James: Yeah. Well you're going to probably pay your mortgage off this year.

Adam: Well yes. Yeah. Hadn't quite planned on it. On it going that far this quickly, but yeah. Yeah.

James: We should just talk about the books themselves.

Let's talk about this particular book that's given you that's given you all this success since December. Just tell me more. Give me the elevator pitch.

Adam: The elevator pitch is: Could you murder your wife to save your daughter? The book's called Her Last Tomorrow. It essentially focuses on Nick Conner. It's told in his first person point of view. He's getting his child ready for school. His wife's got a high-flying job in London. She leaves early. He left. He's a writer. He's left getting the kids ready in the morning, and he puts his daughter in the back of the car. Nips back into the car to grab something he's forgotten. He comes back out 30 seconds later, and she's gone. They call the police. Panic ensues. The normal sort of thing. He then gets a message from the kidnapper saying he can have his daughter back, but he has to murder his wife. It kicks off from there.

James: Intrigue. That's brilliantly intriguing, and a great hook. Obviously you have a slightly disturbed mind, like all writers.

Adam: Yes. When people ask what I do for a living, I say I invent people and then murder them.

James: Up until this point, you are a crime-thriller genre writer. Has there been something different about the first eight books?

Adam: Yes. There have been four in each of the two series that I write. One of them is the Knight and Culverhouse of crime thriller, which are down the kind of the Mark Billing and Ian Ranking, Peter James, kind of roots. In terms of following to British detective who investigate far too many murders happening in a small British town, to be quite honest with you. The other one's the Kempston Hardwick Mysteries, which is a series of more traditional murder-mystery novels, which is actually a bit of a pastiche and a bit of a nod towards the kind of the golden age of detective fiction. Your Agatha Christies, your Dorothy Sayers, and actually very tongue-in-cheek approach to those. Much in a way that, kind of, Jonathan Creek did on the TV.

This was the first book, this most recent one, that wasn't actually in a series. It was a complete standalone book. For that reason I thought that's one of

the reasons why I didn't actually finish it, and I didn't put too much thought into it. When I got stuck, I didn't persevere with it quite as much. I thought, well you follow the old advice everybody gives. Always write a series. Standalone books don't sell. I'm quite glad that I ignored that and got it finished. As you say, the elevator pitch side of things is what sells it. People don't care whether it's in a series or not if the tagline is that strong.

James: I know you're already onto your next book, and I've already heard the elevator pitch for that, which is also brilliantly intriguing. Do you think now, this is it, this is probably the way you're going to go?

Adam: I think so. I still will be writing in my other series. I've got the next few books planned out in each of those series already, but the psychological thrillers are something that I love reading, and I love writing. I've wanted to do for a long time, and it's not massively different from what I do now. Essentially, it's the same crime stories, the same crime thrillers, but told from the point of view of the people that are actually living in that moment, rather than from the police, the investigation, side of things. It's not so different a genre, it's just from a different viewpoint. That's something that I always wanted to sort of do a bit more of. I'm just really glad that it's proven successful. I will be writing a lot more psychological thrillers as well.

James: Let me ask you on behalf of those of us who are still sort of starting out in writing, and I'm writing my first book at the moment. I know lots of other people listen to podcasts at the earliest stage of their careers. How do you discipline yourself? How do you structure your day? What sort of advice and tips do you have to people about how you become a writer? How do you get into the habit of writing?

Adam: You just have to. There's no real secret to it. Whenever anybody says, "I've always wanted to write a book. How do I go about doing it?" I say the same six words. Bum on seat. Fingers on keyboard. There's no other secret to it.

I've given myself a minimum word count that I need to write each day. The reason I do that, again, purely commercial reasons. I know what date my next book will be finished. I can plan ahead releases. Things like that. I know how many books I'm going to write this year, because I know how many words I write each day.

James: How many is that?

Adam: Aiming for six this year.

James: Six words day?

Adam: No. Six books.

James: Six books a year. Is that how many words a day is it?

Adam: Well sometimes it is six, but two thousand words minimum a day. That's my absolute minimum. I don't often stop there. Quite often I'll ... That might take me an hour, and I might carry on and blitz through. Sometimes I can be there til ...

James: Watch countdown.

Adam: Sometimes I can be there at 11 o'clock at night still on 1,400 words. It's sometimes like getting blood out of a stone, but you have to sit down, and you still have to write. You can't go, "Oh actually. I don't think I'll be able to get any writing done today. I'm not in the right frame of mind." In any other job, if you turned up and said, if you're a bricklayer, and you said, "I'm not in the right frame of mind to mix up this cement today, or I'm not really in the right frame of mind to muck out the pigs." You'd be fired innocently.

You've got to treat it as a job. You've got to treat it as a business. You've got to get up in the morning, at whatever time. You've got to sit down. You've

got to write. I know if you've got a full-time job, and you've got children, it's tricky, but even if you're getting up an hour earlier, or going to bed an hour later, or you've got to something out of the day.

You've got to cut your TV out of the day, or something like that. You've got to make sacrifices, and you've got to do it. If it's something you really want to do, and it's a career that you want, and you want to be successful at, that's what you've got to do. I wouldn't have it any other way, personally.

James: I suppose I could cut my second nap out. Start working a bit more. I joke.

Adam: Go to the pub at four, instead of three.

James: Exactly. I'm quite disciplined. That's good.

What writing software do you use, and how do you approach the structure and editing?

Adam: I use Scrivener, which is ideal for my approach. Some people like it, and some people don't. For me, in terms of actually putting a book together, I always start off with a kind of a elevator pitch, if you like, or almost having a paragraph sometimes, which is where I've been going wrong for five years. I then, essentially, plan out the structure of the book. I read quite heavily. The structure of stories and the theory behind stories, and books, and what have you, I'm a bit of a student of the craft as well. I tend to build out structure, so I know what my midpoint is. I know where the turns and twists are coming in. I then have that skeleton, essentially, and I build the chapters around that. Almost like a flow chart.

Within those chapters, then the beats, what happens within the chapters, and it's essentially just starting with that elevator pitch and expanding outwards, until I've got my chapters laid out in Scrivener, and what happens

in each of them, and it's literally just a case of putting the words on the page.

At no point am I going, "Oh, I don't know what's going to happen next," or am I going to have to come back and change that, because I've planned it. I think if you're aiming to be quite prolific with writing, you need to plan ahead so that you don't keep writing yourself into holes, coming back and changing things, and you can get far more books out that way.

James: Yeah. Okay. That was really good, so quite a methodical approach. When you sit down to write, the framework's done. You can just enjoy writing up to those. Hitting the marks, effectively.

Adam: Yeah. All of that. Up until I actually start writing a book, it's all ... It's pure science essentially. There's no kind of staring out of the window. It's a purely scientific method ... I can't get my words out today.

James: Well luckily you're a writer.

Adam: Methodical approach is the word I wanted. Then the fun, in terms of actually the prose and getting the words down, happens after that. That's when you have a bit more fun with the science.

James: Okay. Well, Adam, thank you very much for hosting us here. We're in your house. I should say we're in Flitwick in Bedfordshire, which if you don't know the place you call it Flitwick. Twenty miles down the road or so, and it's been a great pleasure. You are the number one self-published author on Amazon today. How's that feel?

Adam: Bit bizarre hearing that, but yeah. Technically in the chart, everybody above me, at the moment, is either with a huge publishing company or with Amazon.



James: Well it's exciting to see it happen, and you're a regular contributor, I know, to the Facebook group as well. People love following your advice, and we look forward to growing with you, I think, over the next few years.

Adam: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

James: What a nice guy, Adam. When you meet somebody who's been massively successful, and they turn out to be a nice guy, it's slightly annoying. No. It's really good. We're really pleased for him, and it's exciting watching. Since I recorded that interview, the book has gone to even greater heights and greater strengths.

He has been, I think, as high as number 12 in the overall paid Amazon charts. He's been told, by at least one authority, that he is the best selling self-published book of 2016 so far. We've seen pictures of the apple charts with him at number, I think, 4, and JK Rowling's Robert Galbraith book, number 7. Everyone's going to screen grab that if it happens to them, aren't they. He's gone on and on. Let's say he's predicting 1.5 million gross sales of that book this year. Down to earth. Methodical. Thoughtful about it, and made it work.

Mark: He's done fantastically well. Just to kind of round up what I said, where we're at, if you want to listen to Adam in a bit more detail and get the chance to ask him questions, you can join him and me, you can ask me questions too if you want to, although, yeah, send them to Adam. He'll do a good job answering them.

You can sign up for the webinar that we'll be doing on June the 7th. Tuesday June the 7th. 10pm London, 5pm New York, 2pm LA, and to sign up you need to go to [selfpublishingformula.com/adam](http://selfpublishingformula.com/adam).

James: We've set that up, so you can sign up then. There is a limit on sign ups. It's only a thousand. I know we've got several thousand download the podcast every week, so there will be a rush for places there, so get your

place. Once you've secured it, you will also get an automatic link for the replay afterwards.

Just to remind you that the premium course is open. If you're listening to this at a contemporaneous time, the premium course is open for one of its periodic on-boarding of new students. You can check that out at [selfpublishingformula.com](http://selfpublishingformula.com) for all the details. We're rolling out lots of stuff, actually, over the next couple of weeks, so keep your eyes out, and make sure you're involved in our Facebook community, if you're not already. Yeah. That's it. A happy successful, inspiring, story. Something to think about.

Mark: Absolutely, so yeah, I hope everybody enjoyed that, and we'll be back again next week.

James: And we'll see you on the 7th of June for that webinar with Adam. Cheers.

Announcement: You've been listening to the Self-Publishing Formula podcast. Visit us at [selfpublishingformula.com](http://selfpublishingformula.com) for more information, show notes, and links on today's topics. You can also sign up for our free video series on using Facebook ads to grow your mailing list. If you've enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. We'll see you next time.