

PODCAST 17: HOW TO WRITE A BOOK DESCRIPTION THAT SELLS MORE – WITH BRYAN COHEN

James: Hello and welcome to Podcast #17 from the Self Publishing Formula.

Speaker 2: 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 tell stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James: Here we are, Mark. We've got to 17 and I don't know about you, but I can barely stand now. We've had a busy couple of weeks with the launch of the paid course and that is now all done and dusted and we're back into SPF routine. A little rest maybe is needed at some point.

Mark: Yes, I've been managing to keep myself awake today on extremely strong coffee, almost injected it intravenously and slapped myself in the face quite regularly. It's been a combination of super busy with welcoming new students onto the course, then my young son decided that it would be hilarious to wake up between 4:00 and 5:30 this morning so that was great. Yeah, I'm going to jump into bed in a minute and catch a little bit of shut eye. Try to keep myself awake for the evening.

James: Yeah, that is hilarious though, isn't it? It's hilarious from somebody who has children and they're almost teenagers and you have to drag them out of bed in the mornings. I found it quite amusing.

Mark: I'm looking forward to that.

James: Yeah, yeah, it happens more quickly than you think so don't wish it away. What should we say? The launch is done. Obviously, there is a

commercial aspect to what we do because people pay for the course, but we pride ourselves on being a value stop for everybody, regardless of whether you bought into the SPF or regardless of whether you ever intend to. If you listen to the podcast, if you take the free stuff that we give out, including the mini-course Facebook mailing lists, we want this to be a really useful place to be to be part of a community, to help people turn themselves from writers and wanna-be writers, if you're not living off it, let's say, to people who are living off it and making a living from it. That's our main focus and we have a fantastic interview today. In fact, I have the advantage on you, Mark, because you haven't heard it, have you?

Mark: No, not yet. I haven't. You did this without me.

James: I did it behind your back. It's a chat with Bryan Cohen and Bryan does a lot of things and we talk about a few of those at the beginning of the interview, but his specialist area is this focus on copywriting and it's a strange old thing as we discuss in the interview that writers are not necessarily, in fact quite often, are not very good at succinct copy writing when it comes to putting adverbs together.

Bryan's a really great person who's broken down what good copy writing is. He takes us through it in this interview. You can make notes. He will take you through what sentence one in an advert should be, sentence two and three and four, etc.

This all leads towards some live training that Bryan and you, Mark, are going to be doing in the future. We do give the details in the interview. We did eventually get there in the interview, but I will confirm the details on the course that will be on the show notes page afterwards, but he's a good guy, Bryan, isn't he? He does lots. He's a very good guy to have around the community.

Mark: Yeah, he is. He's very busy. Well known from the Sell More Books Show, which is one of the podcasts I'd recommend for people who want to

keep up to date on news in the publishing world, especially with the indie publishing world. He's got irons in lots of different fires. I've met him once. He came over to London about six months ago. Him, Nick Stevenson, and me went out for quite a drunken evening in a rather cool bar in SoHo that I didn't know about, but it's quite near where we used to work, James.

James: Okay.

Mark: I don't know if you know about this. It's about five minutes from where we used to work. It's the Whiskey Shop and at the back of the Whiskey Shop, there is a bookcase that looks like it's a normal shelves of books. It's one of those fake doors that goes down to a little set up bar. Very cool. I didn't even know about it until we found it that evening. That was cool.

James: Yeah, I know about it. I've heard tell of it, but I've never been there. Then my friends went about six months ago and then didn't invite me, so I didn't get to see it then either.

Okay, let's crack on. There comes an email. Let's crack on and listen to Bryan and we'll be back at the end of the interview with the details you need to know about the live training.

Bryan Cohen is here, who is self-described, Bryan, author, entrepreneur, actor, director, producer, adventurer, I notice you also include in your description. A lot of people listen to the podcast will know that you have your own podcast with Jim Kukral, The Sell More Books Show, which has been going ... Gosh, you are into three figures, aren't you in your podcast there.

Bryan: Oh, yeah. We just did Number 114.

James: 114 is out. You've written about creative writing. Readers will know you as the Ted Saves The World series writer, fighting evil but having a

laugh along the way, because let's face it. If you're going to fight evil, you got to smile occasionally, haven't you, right?

Bryan: You got to be quippy about it.

James: You got to have a quip. It's comedy writing, but it's adventure as well. Bryan, thank you so much for joining us. You're a great friend to SPF and I know we're going to get some good value out of you today. We're also going to trail ahead to a webinar which is taking place in the new future, which listeners will be invited to sign up. You and Mark are going to do some excellent teaching together, but more of that in a moment. I want to, first of all, find out about the adventurer title. You've described yourself as an adventurer. Can you qualify this?

Bryan: Yeah, I think I can. I like a challenge. I like an adventure. This podcast interview is an adventure already. Probably about every year I try to do something big that is going to be a great story, that's going to be something really interesting I can talk about in the future.

I think my initial foray into Self Publishing was one of my first adventures and blogging and whatnot. Probably one of my best adventures, I would say, is three years ago, I had an episode that aired, the U.S. version of Who Wants To Be a Millionaire? I was on that show and tried to win as much money as possible before they could run me off the set.

James: You got onto the seat, the hot seat. I don't know if it works the same over there in the format. The fastest finger first thing.

Bryan: They got rid of that in the U.S. No fastest finger, but they have a strenuous screening process to make sure you aren't evil and you plan to use the money for good things, I suppose. I don't know. Really they just want you to be interesting.

James: You got into the hot seat. You'll have to give us a spoiler here.

Is it on YouTube? Can we watch this or can you tell what happened?

Bryan: I can send you a link. It is on YouTube, but it's one of those secret videos so that ABC doesn't get angry at me and take it down.

James: Okay. How did it go?

Bryan: I won \$20,000.

James: Wow. That's nothing to sniff at.

Bryan: Oh, not at all. I was very pleased. It was all and all, a very great adventure.

James: That is a very good adventure. That's great, Bryan. I can see you, I can hear you on Who Wants To Be a Millionaire? I think you're right for the format so I can see why they went through the screening process and came out with you. Just before we move on to more serious things that are going to be perhaps of better value to people listening to the podcast:

What was the question that you bailed on in the end? Presumably you opted out of answering it.

Bryan: Yeah, yeah. I walked away so that I wouldn't have to get it wrong. It was the ninth question and it was, "Which U.S. president was the first to throw out a first pitch in a professional baseball game?" It would have been very tough for your listeners in the U.K.

James: I'm going to guess Woodrow Wyatt.

Bryan: It was not. Woodrow Wyatt or Woodrow Wilson.

James: Woodrow Wilson. I just made up Woodrow Wyatt. He's like a cowboy or something.

Bryan: Woodrow Wyatt was good. It was a good answer. The answer was Howard Taft.

James: Oh, dude, you know, I've never even heard of Howard Taft. I'm sure he was a good president though. That's great.

I think a lot of people know who you are, but there will be plenty of people listening perhaps who don't, but in the Self Publishing community, you're quite a big gun. I think one of the things you do, and you're very similar to Mark in this, is you spend a lot of time trying to find out what's working, a lot of tips about putting some bits and pieces together that are going to help people go from simply wanting to be a writer to being a writer and paying their way.

That's really the goal, isn't it, of a lot of the things that you teach and you disseminate.

Bryan: Yes, I think that it's always been great working with Mark because I know we always want the same thing. We want writers to be able to earn enough to money to do this full time and cut out all the other stuff that isn't making them happy or healthy. Yes, for sure that's one of the main goals I have in life.

James: Okay. I've got a list of areas I think you've been talking about recently that I think it's worth going into so we're going to do that in a moment. Let's just preview the webinar at the beginning and then we'll come back to it with more information at the end.

You're going to do this webinar with Mark. You've got a link ready for this. Should we just get through the date and the link now and then we can do that again at the end?

Bryan: Sure, of course. The link for this webinar

is SellingForAuthors.com/SPF. The date for that webinar is Wednesday, June 29th. That will be at 3:00 p.m. Eastern, which is not the same time ... James: Now, I hate to interrupt you Bryan, but I've got 4:00 p.m. Eastern here.

Bryan: Okay, great. That is different than what I have.

James: What I've got is what you sent me in an email. What I love about this is how professional the two of us both are here.

Bryan: We are incredibly professional. I will get this cleared up, I'm sure, but what matters really is that it's on Wednesday, June 29th. It's going to be in the afternoon U.S. time and the webinar is called "Five Steps to Writing Book Descriptions and Facebook Ads That Sell."

I'm really looking forward to doing this with Mark. I've done this webinar a couple of times. I actually have another webinar I do more often, but Mark asked, "Can you put together a webinar that is more specifically on Facebook ads because that pertains to my audience a little better?" I did that. It's just a really great way to teach people how to write an amazing book description and then how to use that description over and over again in their other aspects of copy writing, like their Facebook ads.

James: Okay, just the details again: Wednesday, June the 29th in the afternoon Eastern time, TBC, but SellingForAuthors.com/SPF. Obviously on our show notes and on our website and on your website you're going to have that link. That's just one to put in the diary and register for it. It's going to be great.

Then let's carry on then with that theme and talk about copy writing. It's odd, isn't it, that you get people who can craft a novel together, but struggle to summarize it.

A lot of authors will say they really struggle to summarize that novel in two sentences.

Bryan: I've said this before, but I always see the Lord of the Rings meme with Gollum from Lord of the Rings saying, "We have to write the blurb, but we hates it." Most people hate writing the blurb. They feel like Gollum. They feel like they're in a cave and they can't figure out how to get out. Fortunately, I'm here to give you guys some info on how to get out of that cave and to not feel like you're in a cave when you are trying to condense things. Because it can be different when you're first starting out, but with a few guidelines in mind, you will succeed a lot more readily.

James: Okay. Let's talk about one of two of those things then that are going to help us. Give is a little preview of where there webinar's going to go. I guess you have to distance yourself a little bit from the book and make it look like you're just some person who's been grabbed in to advertise and sell the book rather than remembering that it's yours and you've got this huge emotional attachment to it.

Bryan: Exactly. It's your baby. Your book is your baby. Your book is your child and you don't want to say, "Oh, this aspect of my child isn't important enough to include." Of course, you end up wanting to include so much, every character, every subplot, everything in there. That just isn't going to work.

When you try to force yourself to cut things down, you don't know what to cut so you just end up hoping for the best, throwing something up there, and really praying that it works and maybe sometimes it will. Sometimes it won't.

It's not really about condensing so much as it is trying to convey what your book is about from a perspective of emotion. How will a reader emotionally connect with your book?

In most cases, that's not done through plot, that's not done through setting, it's done through the character. I think that's the best place to start no matter what genre you're in is to start with that character and help potential readers connect with that character in your book description.

James: The emotional impact that the book as a piece of artwork, if you like, is going to have on someone, because that's going to be the sell of the book anyway, isn't it?

Bryan: Exactly. If you think of any major book success in the last 20 years, more likely than not ... Let's just say just a Harry Potter-type book. People love Harry. They love Hermione. They love Ron. Sure, they talk about Hogwarts, but they don't go and say, "I love Hogwarts." They say, "Hermione reminds me of my daughter."

It's about that connection and so you want to tap into what it is about our character people can relate to. How can they find a connect between either that and their life or that and some kind of feeling they have had?

James: Is there a particular format to ... I mean, the description's go in different places, of course. Amazon has one format and your Facebook ad requires probably tighter copy and BookBub. There's a different way of writing up your book there.

Is there a format you approach to what the first sentence should do, what the second sentence, and what the third sentence should do?

Bryan: Yes, more or less. A first and second sentence, I would say I have a very clear idea of what you should put in there.

The first sentence in your description, I like to think of it, not as part of the synopsis. I think most people say, "Oh, my book description. That's a synopsis of Plot Point A, B, C, D, E, all the way up to maybe half way through the novel so I don't spoil the whole thing."

You start with the hook. You start with ... I've called it a headline. You could call it a tag line, a log line. Whatever you want to call it. It is the essence of your book. Why do people want to buy it? For Mark's book, it's rogue ex-CIA agent saves the world. As simple as that. You just need what that hook is and often it's related to the main character of the book.

James: Yeah, we've talked a lot about Adam Croft in recent weeks. He had such great success with one book and a lot of that could be down to the hook, which is, "Would you kill your wife to save your daughter?"

Bryan: Yup. That is probably one of the best and I know I had heard Adam talk on Joanna's podcast about how he wrote the series just so he could have the strong hook and then he's had so much success with it. There's nothing wrong with writing a book just because it has a strong hook. I think that just goes to show if you write the best hook ever, you might make a million dollars. Adam is a perfect example of that.

James: He's already said that he's written the hook for his next book first. He reverse engineers the process. Actually, Adam started with the Facebook advert. He thought, "What would work well in this environment? That would work well in this environment." Then he wrote the book. He did the advert before he wrote the book. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that business approach.

I think film taglines probably great examples, aren't they, of how to start that description. The famous ones we can think of. Jaws 2, terrible film but great tagline: "Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water." That's not a description of the film. That's not anything to do with the plot. That is that emotional thing that we got when we watched Jaws. It goes into your head when you're in the sea at night, night swimming, you just can't help but hear that cello in the background. I thought that was a great tagline.

These are people who have crafted little sentences with millions of dollars riding on them so they're probably good things for you to look at, aren't they?

Bryan: Oh, yeah. Looking at movie posters, looking at those one-liners. Another one that comes to mind, I believe this is from the movie, Alien: "In space, nobody can hear you scream." Those are the things that stick with you. They have such an emotional resonance that it's so important. If you could reverse engineer and start with the hook like Adam has, that's awesome. If you've already written the book, you need to find the hook in there.

If you're not a trained marketing professional, maybe this is one of those things where you ask your audience, because your readers may be smarter than you are in some of these ways. I love pulling the ideas that readers have come up with for marketing, mostly in the form of the reviews they post.

I will find ideas for headlines in my customer reviews all the time, or in the customer reviews of book that I have written the descriptions for, because readers know how to speak in that reader language. If you use that reader language and you use that in your headlines, then you're already bridged a gap that you wouldn't have been able to do if you really come at it from that "I wrote this book" perspective.

James: Yeah, crowd sourcing your copy, clever.

Bryan: Nothing wrong with that at all.

James: No, that's good. Okay, that's your first sentence and there's ... I'm trying to think of some other good film taglines. All the good ones I can think of are just like that. In fact, the other day I looked up Star Wars. I was wondering what was the tagline for the very first Star Wars film and it was ...

Bryan: Would it be "In a galaxy far, far away ..."?

James: It wasn't, actually. It was "May The Force Be With You." It was on the posters.

Bryan: Oh, I like that okay.

James: I like that. Again, it's not an synopsis. It's intriguing and it's about the spiritual aspect of the film. Again, people always start, who perhaps naturally want to start with "He's got ten days to save the world" type thing. It's what does this piece of work, what's the emotional message from it? May the force be with you. It's intriguing. That's a great tagline for the film and the film did pretty good over the years.

Bryan: I heard some good things about it.

James: I think they're doing the Star Wars museum up your way, aren't they? That's going to be in Chicago.

Bryan: Yeah, I'm really glad they're doing it again.

James: Yeah, we're coming over to see you when that museum's there. I mean, obviously to see you, mainly, but partly to go to the museum.

Bryan: Sure. Second thing is the museum.

James: Yeah.

Bryan: Of course.

James: After the breakfast. We should mention the breakfast. I always ask people when I'm taking mic level at the beginning of this. What did you have for breakfast? I had the most extraordinary answer from Bryan I've ever had and I've been asking that question for years doing interviews. You put a lot of stuff into a blender and then drink it.

Bryan: Yeah, I was really glad to make such an impression on you from my sound test. I was saying how my wife and I are in the midst of doing a green smoothie every day challenge. Today we had a chocolate covered cherry smoothie, which had spinach, almond milk, bananas, cherries, cocoa powder, and cinnamon in it and we blended that all together and we drank it this morning for breakfast.

James: Wow. The face I'm pulling is not necessarily one that's full of delight at the prospect of drinking that but if you say it's good. It sounds good for you, if not good.

Bryan: The cocoa powder helps make it feel chocolatey. The cherries are so sweet that they really just overtake everything.

James: Okay, right. Moving on from breakfast. We've got our first sentence which is this emotional impact which is in a neat description if necessary. Crowd source it from your reviews.

Second and third sentences, do you then get into synopsis at that stage? Where are you now?

Bryan: Yes, in the second sentence and sometimes the headline can be a couple of short sentences. That's a cheat. We'll just say the headline is the one sentence, but it can be two or three. The ones I like to use are often three short ones, but let's get in ... Just past the headline.

First sentence of the synopsis, I love to name the character and say what the character is going through. That's about it. I do not try to throw in 90 plot points or where the character lives or anything like that. I would be much more likely to say that Ted Finley is a nerd with superpowers or ... This is from my young adult superhero book. Ted Finley is your average, dorky teen. Just something that people can latch onto.

They know that person in their life or they see what they're going through like, "This person just got divorced and has nothing left in the bank account." Something that allows them to say, "Okay, now when I see this person's name throughout the rest of the description, it matters to me." If they don't care about who this person is or they don't have a clear picture of them in their mind, why are they going to care when this person is trying to save the world or trying to stop a criminal? I think that's one of the biggest mistakes people make in their descriptions. They don't let us get emotionally invested in that character. It's something you can do in one short sentence.

James: Does that extend to the way that you should construct the book as well for those of us who are starting out in writing, to establish the character in a descriptive way early on? Don't be mysterious about it, because otherwise people haven't got someone to latch onto.

Bryan: Yeah, it absolutely works the same way, because when you think about it, what are the things that keep people from buying your book? Well, if your cover stinks, they're probably going to click away. If you don't have many much social proof or reviews, they're going to click away. The description, if it doesn't sound good, they're going to click away. Also, and I didn't realize this until relatively recently, a fair number of people actually download the samples of books and decide whether or not they're going to read it based on that sample, based on that Look Inside. If your character doesn't sound that interesting from the first couple of pages? Yeah, they're not really going to buy it. It's exactly the same concept.

James: Okay, let's finish up on just the copywriting 101. I know the webinar's going to be more detailed than this. Just to finish off that part of the discussion and then we'll move on to one or two other things. You've got your intrigue. You've got your character description. I'm desperate to know what's next.

Bryan: This is the point where you can start to layer in a little bit more of the plot. What happens? Nothing really subplot-y. Nothing that is going to take you into the weeds. Really at this point, you're following the main character's journey, seeing what happens next to them. If there are very important details that are needed, you can layer them in through transition sentences. When she loses her job suddenly, and then what is happening to this woman now? You can keep transitioning. I love to just transition sentences, introductory clauses, because they keep the momentum going. I always think of a book description more like a poem than straight-up prose, because there's a rhythm to it. You're building the momentum as you go and you don't have anything that is cutting you off. You have some introductory clauses going in there taking you from one sentence to the next. You have short and long sentences to break up the rhythm a little bit. You're really getting the reader into the flow of things.

I know that sounds a little bit vague, but I don't think writing the synopsis for your book is actually terribly difficult if you just keep to the main plot and don't worry about trying to explain everything. I think the most important part from there, you've hooked the reader, you've gotten them excited about the character, now, okay, let's move them along, get them more excited as they go. I would say the next big important part comes right at the end of the synopsis.

That is ... I want to keep you waiting.

James: Yeah, I'm in suspense. To be honest, I'm still thinking about the drink as well, but I am also in the suspense about the big ...

Bryan: I'm telling you, when you come visit me in Chicago, we're all going to have smoothies.

James: This is a big finish and we're going to see how important this is in a moment.

What is this big finish that really is the killer bit?

Bryan: The most important part at the end of your synopsis, which I will note is not the end of your entire product description, the end of your synopsis is you're going to leave them wanting more. You are going to leave them with a cliffhanger.

I know there's this whole anti-cliffhanger thing going on, probably in the indie community and every writing community, but that doesn't pertain to the description. We literally need to leave the reader wanting more because they have to have a reason to click the 'buy' button.

It can be phrased in a question or in a declarative sentence. This is really the part where, "Will the two of them find love in the midst of the wilderness?" Or, "Can he stop the ticking time bomb before it ends civilization as they know it?" Doesn't have to be a question, but it's a lot easier to phrase it in the form of a question while I'm trying to come up with these off the top of my head. More or less, give the cliffhanger. Get people excited. Give them a reason to click that 'buy' button.

James: That's great. It reminds me. There's a guy on Twitter called Andrew Ellard and he's a script editor for television in the U.K. Actually scripted, I think, some Dr. Who's and stuff like that, but what he does on Twitter is brilliant. He will do script notes on something big so if there's been a big television debut of a big drama.

We had War & Peace recently and stuff like that and in films. He'll then do these script notes on them, just for public consumption. They're great to read. He talks in exactly the same tones that you've just spoken about, about tension. He says, "If the tension's not there, this is why this scene didn't work, because there was no tension." We knew what was going to play out or we knew there was no conflict, there was no tension.

You need that as the intrigue to spur that human nature thing, which is you want to get to the resolution. The big problem script writers have, particularly in sitcoms and stuff, is keeping that tension going. Say, it might be sexual tension between Rachel and Ross or whatever. What happens when they get together? That's a great example of why it needs to be there and what you're saying is even in this synopsis, in fact, especially in this little copy here, it's got to be there.

Bryan: Oh, for sure. It's going to make a reader say, "That sounds good," or, "That sounds interesting," or, "That sounds exciting." If they don't say that, they're not going to click the 'buy' button. The tension is very key.

James: Okay, Andrew Ellard, by the way, is [@ellardent](#), E-L-L-A-R-D-E-N-T. Worth following on Twitter for those notes.

Okay, just to put this into perspective then, Bryan, I know that you and Mark worked on an ad a little while ago for one of your box sets.

The copy was the difference between the ad working and not working, which we know can happen for sure, but you saw that in action.

Bryan: Yes. What we were doing and this is the prime example of why you can't just copy exactly what someone else is doing and assume it's going to work. I know you guys have seen that in a big way with Self Publishing Formula. I was doing an ad and we were doing a little experiment for my podcast, the Sell More Books Show, and Mark was trying to help do a box set ad.

We were working on it together for my young adult superhero series. For some reason, it was a direct sales ad, straight to Amazon, it was not working. It was not performing well. We thought we had the targeting in pretty good shape, but was not converting. We said, "I don't have any idea why this isn't working. Let's put it out to the community."

We put it out to the Self Publishing Formula group and for the life of me, I don't remember exactly who pointed it out, but someone sent us a screenshot of their mobile device and showed that the first sentence, which was a little bit long, which was describing what was in the box set, how many reviews it has, etc., the first sentence cut off in the middle.

It didn't leave people hanging in a good way because it was in the middle of a sentence. It didn't have the hook. The hook was below that, actually talking about what was exciting about the book. We said, "All right, let's change that." We workshopped a couple of ideas for headlines and we ended up using the hook, a young adult supernatural hook, "When supernatural war strikes, a nerdy teen will rise."

We've got that it's young adult, we've got that there's a superhero in there, etc, etc. Things shot up by about 20% immediately after we put in this headline and the ad started getting a positive return on investment, all because we changed the copy. My sentence that I had written in there before, it was working perfectly well for Mark, because I basically copied, just changing in my info for his for a long sentence, but it wasn't working for mine so we had to make a slight change and it made all the difference.

James: That's a good example. We see it in the Facebook group, the SPF Facebook group, we see it quite a lot that people will post an ad that's not working. You've got to be good. People are very polite about it, but you obviously put your ad out there and you need to understand and take onboard some of the things that were said, but they can occasionally get a long list of everyone pointing out that it's far too long, it's unwieldy, I don't understand what this character is doing, what is this book about, is it romance, it is a thriller, it's not clear. All of that stuff comes out.

The biggest mistake you will frequently see, which we go back to from the beginning is overlong descriptions, overlong literal descriptions. It's a very, very common mistake. But the edge between going to your 9-to-5 and writing on the train on the way home or in the evening and sitting at home

making money as a writer can be this stuff, selling the book, getting this bit right can be the edge between making money and not so.

It's great so far. Thank you very much, Bryan. I want to broaden it, if you don't mind, a little bit.

Bryan: Not at all.

James: Let's talk a little bit about generating sales. We talk a lot about launch. We talk a lot about the initial campaign for a book. I know that you've put some thought into where there's a natural drop off, what are we talking? A month, 90 days in where that can really slow down to an absolute trickle. Options look a little bit limited at that stage.

What's your advice or your thoughts at that point for an author?

Bryan: A lot of people refer to this as the 30-day cliff or the 90-day sales cliff on Amazon. This is when if you've gotten a natural boost at the start of your launch, it can start to go down. For some that's more of a precipitous drop than others.

Your options are a little more limited at that point, because you can't have this big launch boost anymore and Amazon may not give you the natural shooting out emails about your stuff. You're more on your own at that point.

When you're doing that, you really need to think about conversions. You need to think about, "Okay, I have this page out here, essentially it's a sales page, and I am getting traffic to it," and if you aren't getting traffic to it, you obviously need to send traffic to the page through Facebook ads, through promotions, if you're one of the 5% that gets accepted by BookBub, good for you, you use that, you use other email promotion sites.

No matter what methods you use to send traffic, because your options are more limited at this point, you need to improve those conversions. Getting

people who visit your page, a higher percentage of those people to actually click the 'buy' button. That conversion rates becomes significantly more important and when you change your description to be a better fit for your genre, your potential readers, that conversion percentage, goes up.

Sometimes it's only by a couple percentage points. Sometimes it can go up by 100%. All you need to necessarily change is just improving your book description. That simple change can make a world of difference when you promote your book going forward.

James: Let's just explain the concept of conversions and conversion rates to people who are not quite as advanced into this as you are.

Bryan: Of course, of course. Let's say that you have 100 people that visit your Amazon page on the day of a given promotion. If two of those people buy your book, your conversion percentage is 2%, because 2 out of those 100 have purchased it.

You don't know that 100 people have visited because Amazon obviously is not sharing that information any time soon, but let's say that instead of two people, because you have a better description, your Look Inside is fantastic, you got 20 more reviews. You now get four of those people to buy, your conversion percentage has doubled from 2% to 4%.

With a lot of promotions, you can send a significantly higher amount than 100 people. You could send 1,000. Something like BookBub will send 10,000 or more. If you can even improve your conversion percentage by a single percent or two, let alone 100% up from 2% to 4%, then you will see that difference in your bottom line in a big way, compared to the more traffic that you actually send to that page.

James: Yeah, and conversion's work in different ways, of course. It's not just sales. It can be leads for your mailing list in the first place. It can be getting

people from one ad to a landing page in the first place. That in itself is a conversion even before they've put it in. You need to micro convert sometimes and work out the steps along the way to find out where people are dropping off in the chain.

Bryan: Of course.

James: This can get complicated, Bryan. I'm doing YouTube advertising at the moment and AdWords is probably one of the more complex systems and particularly with conversion stuff, because you can either do it through the Google Analytics or more traditional pixels. Even me just saying that sentence, some people will be glazing over at this point.

Bryan: Pixels? What?

James: What is a pixel? It sounds like a little elf in your garden. There are people around you you can reach out to who can look after some of that stuff for you if you're not completely familiar with it. You actually only need to do some of this complex stuff. You get your head around it in a brief period of time, at the setup at the beginning. From then on, really you're looking at a dashboard and reading data. People shouldn't be scared of it. Once you get that technical stuff set up at the beginning.

I don't know how technical you are. Do you insert conversion pixels into headers yourself there, Bryan?

Bryan: I wish they were conviction pixels. That would be amazing. Yes, I use conversion pixels on my website for my ads that go to landing pages and whatnot. I do tracking and create audiences and like you guys, I have my products that I put out there so I'm always trying to get people back referred.

I do a lot of that kind of stuff on my own, but I also do outsource some of these things because it can take some time to get it all figured. That's why I

love when you can have some kind of method. When Mark and I were working on that ad, I changed one thing, I set it, I forget it, I put it up there, and that one thing made an improvement in conversion.

That's the kind of thing I love about copywriting is because you don't necessarily need to know all the technical stuff to make the improvement. You don't need to know what a pixel is. You don't need to rid the pixels from your garden. You just need to work on improving the rhythm, the focus, and the flow of what you're putting out there. That, in itself, can make a change. When you combine it with all the other stuff, I mean, it's just fantastic, but you don't need to learn that much technical know-how to get that kind of stuff going in the right direction.

James: I'm going to let you go to your lunchtime shake or your afternoon shake in a moment. Let's move back towards copywriting then, which I know is your specialist area to conclude with.

We talked about ads at the beginning or book descriptions at the beginning. Actually, there's quite a lot of writing that you do that's not just the writing of your book. It's not just a book description. Most authors will have a list and will email their readers from time to time. You'll be asked to do descriptions in different formats as we mentioned earlier, BookBub, trying to get a BookBub pitch itself in the first place is in itself a bit of copy writing, separate to the one that you then do for the ad.

Where do people start with this? We talked in detail about the book description earlier, but is it the same principles you apply to all these different places?

Bryan: Yes, more or less. You are trying to making sure that your writing elicits some kind of response. In the book description, you want people to get excited and click the 'buy' button.

For the emails, when you get people onto your email list, some of those people have come in through a free promotion of some kind or you're giving them a novella or a free novel, you want them to take a couple actions. You want them to read that free thing so that they get excited enough to buy your paid things, and then when you get ask them to buy the paid things, they do it.

You don't want to be pushy about it. It's a balance. You don't want to be pushy in the description either. You want to encourage them toward that kind of emotion where they get excited enough to buy it and maybe you want to tell them a little bit about yourself along the way. That's with the emails.

With the ads, obviously, like you had mentioned earlier, it's shorter, it's punchier, you have less time to elicit that desired response to get people to click. Same with a landing page. You don't have a lot of room. You want to make sure your button is above the fold so that people will actually click on it and get excited.

Another thing with copywriting that I think is important in the early days when you don't have that advance reader list that Mark has used to launch his books very high in the store and get 100+ reviews on the first day. If you don't have that list yet, but you need reviews, another thing you can do is send out review requests to book reviewers. That has a certain response you want to elicit from people. You want them not to delete your email. You want them to actually go and review it. Another thing, you can't be too pushy but you need to be pushy enough to make sure they take the desired action.

It really comes down to writing in a certain way to get people to take action but without them feeling like you're coercing them or pushing them too hard into that action.

James: It's when you talk to a salesman who's having a conversation with you that's valuable because it's giving you information and steering you towards a sale. Is it Gill in the Simpsons who's desperate? His wife and kids are going to starve if you don't buy the car there and then. Nobody wants to do business with that guy. It's a tone thing.

Conversation's probably the keyword I would imagine with that type of email. It is conversation rather than the pitch that you do in other circumstances.

Bryan: When it all fits together, it's perfect. When you say your email isn't just leading into what you want to get out of this person reading this email. It should be a story. It should have something that resonates with people, like your description has a character people can resonate with. It's all about that emotional resonance.

Then the story you tell when it's connected to the offer in that email, then it flows better. It makes more sense. You can take things to an even higher level when you have something at the end of that email that's trying to show that you care about them. You ask them for their opinion. You ask them what they think about this story that you just told or what books they read.

When you have that all going together, it does feel a lot more conversational as opposed to trying to push someone into something, you are telling them a story, you're saying, "Hey, here's how you can take action on this story," and then you ask them, "Hey, what do you think of this story?" Don't direct quote say that in your email, because that is not good, but when those things combine into one email, it feels a lot more like two friends talking as opposed to a salesman like Gill.

James: I think some people will find this quite a lot to take onboard, because there is a bit of an art to it, but again I think Mark's very good at this. Any bit of communication he does, for him, is about the long term. It's

not necessarily about selling a book in that email to that person. It's about knowing that that person will come around to buying a book, three, four, classically seven touches, I think that's been moved forward in the digital age, but three, four touches down the line. Maybe it coincides with a Facebook ad. You can take the pressure off a bit. It's not about that there and then. It's about the long term and have that in your mind as you're writing.

Bryan: You want people to trust you. In Internet marketing, people talking about the know, like, and trust factor. It's just the same in your author career. You want readers who believe you and trust in what you're doing and they like the books that you put out there and then they're a lot more willing, after reading your free book, to buy your second book.

James: This is all great and we don't want to go into too much detail, because the webinar's going to be the place for more details so just give us a quick pre-see of what the webinar will be about.

Bryan: The webinar is going to deep dive a little bit into what you do for those book descriptions, how you write them. Some examples as to how to help people get the feel for that with their particular genre. And then how to deconstruct what you just wrote and turn that into an ad that isn't overlong, an ad that is that short, sweet, really simple way to get more clicks, to get people to take the actions you want, and to boost your sales and your list as a result.

James: Great. You can register, again, at SellingForAuthors.com/SPF, Sierra, Pappa, Foxtrot. I could just have easily said Self Publishing Formula, but SPF. Wednesday, June the 29th.

Bryan, thank you so much indeed for joining us. One of the things that we try to do with this podcast is to keep it relatively tight because it's a crowded market and we know that people want to listen, of course, to the Sell More Books Show, as well as the SPF Podcast. So we give some people

some time in the week and try to keep the interviews to about 45 minutes, which is where we are. It's been an absolute pleasure.

Brilliant to hear you talking in such clear terms, really bringing some clarity to the purpose of those description times when you're writing and I think that's what it needs. As you started at the beginning, people will often start that process and actually not really know what they're doing at this point, which is ironic because they're writers and they've just written a book, but it's an area that we could all do with a bit of help on. That's been brilliant. Thank you!

Bryan: Thank you very much for having me, James. I really do appreciate it.

James: I hesitate to ask what you're having for dinner so I should let you go off to Mrs. ...

Bryan: I'll consider that later. It will not be from a blender.

James: It won't involve spinach. Oh, you can have spinach for dinner. That's normal. It's spinach for breakfast that doesn't really work. Thank you very much, Bryan. We'll speak to you again soon.

Bryan: All right, sounds great.

James: It is odd, isn't it, Mark, that people who can write a novel and a short story and a novella can't put together the five sentences needed to sell the book. Why is that?

Mark: It's a completely different discipline. In the same way that writing a screenplay is very different from writing a novel, condensing 100,000 words into, say, 50 words. It's a different skill. It's quite difficult.

Getting tips from someone like Bryan is a good idea. I thought I was pretty good at writing copy, but I paid Bryan to write the copy for my last John Milton book, *The Jungle*, and he did a much better job than I would have

done. It would have taken me hours sweating over commas and colons and sentence length and all that kind of stuff and Bryan came back with something that was really effective very quickly. Yeah, he knows what he's talking about.

James: Yeah, we talked in the interviews. You heard about disengagement a little bit from you, the writer of the novel, because clearly you have such a intimate knowledge of it. You've got to step back and think, "What impact does it have on somebody?" Taking that step back is the difficult thing as most people would find editing their own books is impossible for that very reason.

Okay, now we can confirm with all accuracy the actual time of this live training. It is Wednesday, June the 29th at 9:00 p.m. U.K, 4:00 p.m. in New York, and 1:00 p.m. Los Angeles. Wednesday the 29th. You can subscribe or you can sign up for the webinar. It's free of charge, of course. SellingForAuthors.com/SPF. SellingForAuthors, all one word, .com/SPF. We'll have that in our show notes. That's going to be even more detailed than we've been through in this podcast interview and something that I think is going to be of great value and use to you.

Mark: We're bumbling, James, aren't we? Who's more tired? Me or you?

James: Yeah, I know, but it's fun. It's an absolute blast and I have to say, we started this podcast, I don't know, you start every project slightly hesitantly, don't you? You're not entirely sure that it's going to work. I completely love this. I love every edition of the podcast we've done. I'm learning absolutely loads and it's great to get lots of good feedback from people who are listening every week and happy to be part of this community. I'm probably waffling now but I just want to say how much I'm enjoying this.

Mark: You sound emotional.

James: It's been emotional.

Mark: Don't cry, James.

James: No, no. Okay, look, that's it from us for now. We've got some super stuff coming up over the next few weeks. We've got some great interviews already in the bag and more to be done shortly. Each one we hope will add a little bit more, another nugget of value and information for you to help your writing career. I will see you next Friday on Podcast #18. Between then and now, what should we say? Get done. Get some words done.

Mark: I'm going to bed.

James: And you're going to bed. Bye!

Mark: Bye!

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