

PODCAST 19: HOW BOOKS TURNED TO ONLINE COURSES CAN CREATE AN INCOME – WITH DAVID SITEMAN GARLAND

James: Hello. Welcome to Podcast Number 19 from the Self Publishing Formula.

Speaker 2: 2 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: Hello. Welcome to Part 2 of 3 of our Mini Series on Non-Fiction and how to create a revenue stream from your non-fiction ideas.

Who are we aiming this at, Mark? What sort of non-fiction people are we talking about?

Mark: I think anybody with any kind of knowledge or expertise that they think would be useful to other people. Anyone can look at, on the one hand, writing a non-fiction book, and it's a still perfectly viable way of delivering that knowledge.

On the other hand, we're looking at a billion dollar business industry now in terms of building courses and selling those courses to people as a way for them to excel in their learning.

James: Online courses are a huge area, and for obvious reasons in a way. It's a really convenient, attractive way of self-improving basically. In the old days, you would have had to pay a consultant for one-on-one training, which is prohibitively expensive and quite difficult to arrange, or you go to seminars, real live people in a room somewhere in a nearby city.

Again, that's expensive all around.

Online learning where you get incredibly detailed training, many hours of it. You can watch it, and absorb it in your own time. You can watch it several times. You can really become an expert in an area, and an expert in an area that's ultimately going to ... depending on what you're trying to do it for, but could easily turn into something that's going to make you money, and possibly change your life, change your career.

It doesn't suit absolutely everything. I was thinking the other day about the big self improving areas like becoming a doctor and a pilot. I guess you still have to go to a hospital and get in a plane at some point. There's lots of other areas. I suppose if you, for instance, you're a day trader, I think that would really be a good area. If you've got an expertise in day trading, I think doing an online course and telling people how to set themselves up into that area or maybe financial advising. There is a myriad of ideas. Our guest today is somebody who understands the mechanics, and also the marketing process necessary to turn that idea into a revenue reality for you. He was an inspiration for us. He was one of the go to guys for the Self Publishing Formula when we started our germ of an idea with me and Mark.

Mark: He was. He originally taught Nick Stephenson when Nick did his 10K readers course. Nick then recommended David to me. I had looked at David's course, it's called "Create Awesome Online Courses," which I'm always a little bit leery of the word awesome. It suits David like a glove. You'll hear when he starts talking, he's totally awesome.

He got this course going. Nick raved about it. I'd looked in it. I thought it was interesting. We spent \$1,000 on it about a year ago. It really did provide us with a really, really useful template that I followed quite carefully when I set up the first iteration of Facebook Ads Course. It's really good for thinking about what you might be able to teach, and how to prove ideas,

how to set things up, technically, how to do it, then how to advertise it, how to handle finding customers, customer care. It really covers everything. There are other courses available in the market. I would say David's is one of the best. He's been doing it for a long time. He's extremely experienced. We're going to get loads and loads out of this interview with him.

James: Okay. David Siteman Garland is a guru for mediapreneurs, which is a term, by the way, that he came up with. His site, The Rise To The Top, is a gold mine of instructional detail and motivational tips on how to sell digital products and programs online. Now, here at the SPF, we know that his stuff works, because David is the guy that we went to when we launched our Facebook Ads for Authors Course, which in a bit of a journey, has brought us to this point, David, where we now have you as a guest on our podcast. I'm pretty happy that you were there right at the beginning for us.

David: There we go. It goes in full circle. I'm excited to be here. Thanks for having me.

James: Is this a Star Wars moment where the student ... No. No. We haven't got to ...

David: Exactly.

James: We haven't got there.

David: It's some kind of moment.

James: We're still the patter ones, I think. David, look, this is a part of a mini series within our podcast that we're doing about revenue generation from factual. In your area, factual is not necessarily using the book as a revenue generator, it's using the book as a lead generator, right?

David: Right.

James: Tell us a little bit about the approach, the people who, I don't know, let's say they've got a book on windsurfing.

What is their approach to revenue generation?

David: It's funny, because for me, in 2010, which was before I mastered this, I actually wrote a published book. The funny thing was I just had no clue what I was doing, like many first time authors where you're not sure where the revenue is coming from, is it the book? Is it something from the book? Really, at the end of the day, for the most part, the most successful authors that have been students and customers of mine, really, it turns into one of 2 things. It's all about an online course. It's all about creating an online course and teaching your expertise. What I've noticed is that it goes 2 different ways. An example you just said, windsurfing.

James: I just made that up.

David: Let's say someone writes a windsurfing book. Well, a logical lead in for that is that someone can take your step-by-step windsurfing course to learn how to windsurf in the deepest and windiest of seas in less than 30 days. The thing is it just adds up a new level when you're an author. It says, "Okay. Here is my book that's an entry point." Some people will even call it a business card in some cases, even though we know it's much more than that. Then, people that really want advanced hand-held training to get a result can then purchase your course. That's a great way of looking at it. Now, on the other hand, too, and we're talking about this actually by email, is a lot of folks who are listening to this and follow you guys are also fictional authors, is that a fair thing to say, as well?

James: Yeah, absolutely.

David: Not unlike Mr. Dawson, right?

James: Indeed.

David: What you also have to think of is you might be thinking, "Well, I'm not teaching something specific. I'm not doing a how to book, or a business book, or something like that." Is a course, an option for me?

I would say, "Yes, it's exactly what you guys did, in many cases with authors." There's a big industry of people teaching what they've done out there online. A great example with you guys. Mark's got these great books, they're thrillers. He didn't teach people necessarily how to write thrillers or something like that. He created a course on Facebook Ads for Authors. You might have a skillset right now. Maybe your skillset is writing funny stories. You could teach people how to do that, or something that might be different than your actual audience for your books. That's okay, as well. There's 2 different ways of looking at it.

James: Mark is in exactly that position where he does have 2 different audiences. I think before we get on to some of the strategies and tips, I want to talk to you about pricing, and that sort of thing.

We should say that you do have to be able to give something here. It has to be an area of expertise. You shouldn't underestimate that most people. If you're turning out books, there are areas of expertise.

In Mark's case, he knew he had the social media advertising stuff cracked. He could see in black and white supersonic boost to his life. That, therefore, was something that he could then turn into a course and instruction.

Other people, for them, like you say, it could be story-structure, or there's got to be something, isn't there?

David: Yeah. I heard one yesterday. Actually, someone brought up an idea on a training I was doing of doing a course centered around how to come up with the perfect character for a fictional book. Do you know what I mean? There's a lot of different opportunities here.

I think a good way to look at it, people are thinking to themselves, "I'm not an expert." That's a classic thing I hear all the time. "I don't know. I'm not an expert." The bottom line is the expert theory doesn't come flying in the window in the middle of the night and just one day, you wake up and you're an expert. The way I like to look at it for people is a lot of times, the topic's right under your nose.

What is something that you've gotten results from that you can help other people get results?

We've had thousands and thousands of successful students of mine with their online courses. Some folks are just starting from a point of, I'll just make up an example, of, "You know what, I taught myself how to play clarinet over the age of 40." This is an actual course that's from a customer of mine. She taught herself how to play clarinet at an adult age. Now, she has a course teaching other adults how to play clarinet. She doesn't have 50 degrees in clarinet playing, you know, whatever those might be out there.

Bottom line is if you've gotten yourself results, and/ or results with other people in some form or fashion, then you're qualified to teach this. I think that's one of the key things to keep in mind, because it really does hold people back; they wait and wait and wait and wait. There really are lots of opportunities right now to hone in on a specific skill in something that you could teach.

James: In many cases the person who's ahead is the person who's decided to take the step.

David: Exactly.

James: Nothing magic about there. Actually, for a lot of our people listening to podcast, their area of expertise, something they can leverage in this way may not be their writing. It may be their day job, actually.

David: Sure.

James: I mean, I've often thought day trading would be ... I don't know how much day trading courses are out there, but that's got to be a fantastic area. I keep looking for the perfect day trader who's quite charismatic. We can do an online course together, because it's my secret plan to become a gazillionaire.

David: There we go.

James: Something like that. I'm coming to you, of course, David, for the tips when that happens.

David: People fall into 2 categories. Category 1 are people that know exactly what they want to create their course on. If so, that's great. There's some great ways you can hone in on that and verify that, and make sure there's a market for it. That's awesome.

Then, there's also category number 2 of people that are sitting there saying, "Well, I'm not 100% sure. It could be this or that, or maybe I don't know it all." Actually, when I was getting started, I was more in category number 2. I did a podcast for 5 years. I had all these different interviews. I just wasn't sure what I was going to create a course on.

A big tip for people is to look in your life and think about what are some things you've accomplished. If you go to a party, or on social media, or whatever it might be, and someone asks you questions, what are they asking you questions about? Are they asking for tips on how did you lose the weight, or how did you get the book published, or whatever those questions might be, a lot of times, the topics are right under your nose. You don't even know it until you start to look for it.

One of the key things that I encourage people to really think about is what is something that you can teach that you've done that's results-oriented? That's the big thing. If you close your eyes and you picture

someone goes through your course, and they do everything you say, because they're just a rock star of following, what would be the result? That's one of the key things to think about is making that there's a concrete result of taking your course as you think of putting this together.

James: It's got to be a measurable thing?

David: Exactly. It might not be literally something like "They made \$10,000," or anything sketchy like that that. You would never want to promise.

Case in point, you're an author. Now, you're going to be driving leads via Facebook with Mark's Facebook Ads course. Do you know what I'm saying? Or, with my course, is of course, to create a course and launch it. You want to have a scenario that, if they follow what you're saying, this is what's going to happen, or this is going to be the result.

James: Then, an important step that I know you spoke to us quite early on is to understand what the audience wants, as well. It's not just an assumption at the beginning that what you've got to say is what they want.

David: That's very important. There's definitely some tips on doing that. What I like to do is good old fashioned surveys, nothing fancy, nothing crazy. You can use any kind of survey software out there. I use something called Wufoo, W-U-F-O-O. SurveyMonkey, whatever it might be. I simply ask people "What do you want to know more about blank?" Blank is the topic that you're thinking about for your online course. What do you want to know more about horseback riding? What do you want to know more about day trading with less than \$10,000, or whatever it might be. You don't mention a course. You don't need to mention anything. You're just getting some feedback. Then, you use whatever assets that you have to get that survey out. It might be you have an email list, you might have a blog, you might have a podcast.

If you're just getting started, maybe you just have a personal Facebook page, or something like that. That is some great market research that you can do absolutely free to start to get feedback, to start to get ideas. Also, the survey is very much a confidence builder. You'll notice that if you do this, is that you'll start to realize, "Oh my god. I know a lot more than I think I do on this topic."

I remember when I sent out my first survey. This was about doing interviews. My first course was about doing online interviews, because I've done 500 of them, plus, and people are always asking me how to get guests, how I did this, how I did that. I remember I was getting the questions back, because I was in that, "Well, do I know enough phase." I was "I can't believe people are asking this. Of course I know the answers to this." It's a big confidence builder and testing of the market, as well.

James: Another thing, I think, another way of thinking about it is, A, you're absolutely right. You probably know a lot more about the subject than you think you do. B, the internet is an incredibly enabling thing. There are people whose lives could be changed because they can take your course, and make some big decisions in their lives. That's not something to be embarrassed about or be scared about. You're going to make money, hopefully from it, if you get things right.

Think about in terms of using internet to its best advantage for people.

David: I couldn't agree with you more. At the end of the day, what this really is about is it's a results-oriented business, when you do online courses. You have to come from the place of wanting to help people. You want to have people have results.

I mean, it sounds almost cliché, but you want to be changing people's lives one way or the another, whether it's saving them time or money, or teaching them a new skill. Those are the most successful courses out there as the people that are driven by that mission to want to help people. Of

course it's going to make great money, and great freedom, and all these great things in your business, but it has to come from a place of wanting to help people.

It's not just the courses on making money, or something like that. I mean, helping people is such a wide spectrum of different things that you can do, whether it's helping people have better dates, or get more dates, or how to get your baby to sleep. I can tell you right now, that's an invaluable one that we have.

James: No doubt.

David: Right, with the little daughter that I have right now, I can understand that one for sure. There's always ways to be thinking about that. When you come from that place of wanting to help people, that's invaluable. The people that have longevity in this business, and also people that have the most passionate customers, are the ones that get results.

James: The idea then of getting started, we do have quite a few authors who have non-fiction books and stuff. I had a long conversation the other night. This, I think, goes to the people who are ... It's not so niche, their area. It's quite broad. That is quite important at an early stage to hone them what it is that they do that's different, and where their particular expertise are.

I guess in business, you call this the USP; that's something else that you need to sort out quite early on in the process.

David: My saying is that specific sells, and more specific sells even more at a higher price. A thing to keep in mind is the more specific you can go with your course, the better. This is one of the key mistakes that I see is people going way too broad. You want to solve a specific problem, or help with a specific ambition. I'll use a couple of examples and just show you how you can hone down.

You can hone down two different ways. You can do both, as well. It's either by topic, or for audience. A great example of one for audience would actually be Mark's course. Let's just use that as an example. Facebook Ads for Authors. It's not just Facebook ads. It's not just ads. It's not just ads for everybody. It's Facebook ads for authors. Now, let's say, you're interested in Facebook ads. You've got 2 courses in front of you, one is just a general course on Facebook ads, and the other one is Facebook ads for authors. You're an author, which one are you going to go with?

One of the big ways that people can compete with big competitors in online courses and things like that, is becoming much more specific when it comes to either the audience you serve, or the topic that you do. That's an interesting way of looking at it, because you really want to be clear on who it's going to be for. I think that's one of the big mistakes that I see all the time when it comes to courses.

James: I guess, ideally both of those would be quite specific. A specific audience, and a specific thing to do with them.

David: Right. Exactly. I like to look at it as kind of a laser cut situation. Since we're on the topic of authors, let's say you're doing a course on how to write a book. Of course, there's plenty of courses on that, right? Let's say you were thinking to yourself, "Well, how do I stick out from the pack?" Well, a couple of different things, one, when there's other courses on your subject, that's a great thing. It's more of a red flag if there's not courses on your subject.

James: Yeah.

David: Because it's showing that there's a market out there. There's always ways to stand out, because no one has your personality, no one has the way that you're going to do it. What I always get more concerned about is people saying, "Well, there's no other courses on my topic. No one else is selling to my audience." Well, that's like, I'm throwing red flags all over the

place if I hear something like that. You know what I'm saying? Because, there's always ways to stand out.

One of my favorite ones is to get even more specific. Let's say you're thinking about doing a course on how to write a book, which I think is a very, I don't want to say typical, but a common course idea that people have that are authors. I'm not blasting that. That actually is a great topic. You could go far more niched with that. You could just say, for example, you could do a course on just how to write a proper proposal if you want to get a traditional publisher to say yes. Does that makes sense?

James: Yeah.

David: Make all the way down to a specific need, or just how to write the actual book, the outlines, the tips, and things like that. You don't need to bite off more than you can chew. The more specific you get, the better. That's how I see a lot of my customers compete with really, really big competitors that have been around forever, is they get more specific. There's riches in niches.

James: I guess you think to the bits that would have helped you, what would appeal to you, because if it's, as you say, that broad title "How to write a book," you're probably not going to buy that. If it's "How to write a police thriller." Very specific area.

David: That's awesome. That's a great example.

James: Yeah. We should do that one.

You're thinking straightway, "God I wish I'd had that course when I set out. It would have made life easier."

David: Right.

James: I can do it.

David: That makes a great point, too, is that I don't know if you've ever heard this one, this is kind of a cliché term in business sometimes where people are like "I am not my customer," or you are not your customer. What I've actually found with courses is actually the opposite is very much true. In many cases, the customer is you, maybe even you a few years ago.

James: I think that dovetails with the way good authors think is basically they write the books that they would like to read.

David: Exactly. A lot of times, I find myself and I find my customers a lot of times, when they're writing copy for their courses, saying, "God, I wish I had this when I was getting started," just like we just said a couple of minutes ago. That's one of the key things.

It's a very powerful thing. Think back when you were getting started, what was something you wish you had, like a really specific course that was on that you would have been "Oh my god. That would have have accelerated my growth, or that would have saved me time, or that would have saved me money big time." That's another great way of looking at it.

James: Great. Let's talk about mailing lists a little bit then. It's a common thread with people selling books and having a space online. I know that it's absolutely essential, as well, in your world.

David: You know, the truth of the matter is that's the life of this business, is your email list and your relationship with that email list.

James: In terms of building your email list, for somebody who is starting out with maybe they've got their books selling, their fiction books, in that instance.

They've got basically a blank sheet of paper for the other side of the business that they've got the idea from, from this interview, hopefully. Where do they even begin, David?

David: Great question. Let me just also specify something that's important is that people debate this all the time: Is there a magic number that needs to be on your email list to have a successful online course? The answer is really no, because I've seen everything across the board.

When I first launched my first course, which was "Create Awesome Interviews," there were just 400 people on the email list for that course, just 400 people. It did \$19,800 in sales. Now, that course grew and grew and grew, grew, and grew and grew, because when there's one, there's more. Don't think that you have to build an email list, necessarily of 50,000 people before you launch something. I think that's one of the key things to keep in mind before you even talk about list building, because too many people wait too long. Is the size of list important? Yes. Also, you want to move forward with it so you can get it out there and get more and more customers over time, makes sense?

James: Yeah, it does.

Is that to do with pricing, as well?

David: Yes, it does. Really, it starts with a list. We could talk pricing for sure. I want to give some list tips, because I think that's important that you just talked about.

One mistake that happens with email lists is that people don't have people opt in for something specific. Meaning, it just says, "Join my email list, then I'll sell you some stuff." Or, "Just the list and you'll get nothing, but at some point I'll give you something."

Instead, what you want to do, and this is all about getting your house in order before you get traffic, because traffic is actually easier than you think. This is the part that's very important, where people miss. Is that you want to have people opt in, which means enter your email address, for something free. We call these opt in pages. We call these lead pages. We call these landing pages. We call these squeeze pages. There's a million different terms for them.

I personally use something called lead pages, but you can use anything you want. Doesn't matter. The goal of this page is quite simple, it's to give away something free in return for their email address. They get something free, you get their email address. Then, later on, you're going to bring them down a path towards the sale with free content, and then doing a launch, and all that kind of good stuff.

On this page, you want to give away something free. There's plenty of examples. Let's choose a random topic that we could come up with something. I always like a random topic that I know nothing about. I'll let you choose anything you want, and we'll come up with something.

James: Snowboarding.

David: Snowboarding. You could start out with an opt in page that gives away a free video on snowboard trick tips, something like that. They enter their email, they get a free video where you're going to go through some tips. Another thing you could do is a snowboarding buyers guide, or something like that, where you go through all the cool equipment they have to look. They enter their email address, they get a pdf with something like that, like a buyer's guide, or something like that.

Another thing you could do would be like a cheat sheet. Some tips on pulling off your first trick, things like that. You get the idea there. These are called lead magnets. Lead magnets are things that people opt in for, they get them free.

Personally, I love things that are video-related, because they have a higher perceived value. One of the things that I teach, and one of the things I love is creating a free video series for people. In the snowboarding example, maybe you'd give them 3 free videos where they learn a trick in each video, right? They opt in, they get the first video. A couple of days later, they get a second video. A couple of days later, they get a third video, whatever it might be.

Best thing to start, and I want to give you the full scope there, is really with one. Just start with one, as you get started, something that your audience would find valuable as your first opt in page. What your job then becomes, I'm putting that in air quotes, "Job," is to drive as many of the proper people to that page as you possibly can. Because the reason is that you will build a targeted email list, which is much better, than just shooting a bull horn out there, shooting a shot gun out there, getting a bunch of random people, and then trying to figure out what they're really into. Now, you're really specific. You know if they opted in for the snowboarding thing, they're interested in snowboarding. That's very obvious, right?

Then it becomes, "How do you get traffic to your page?" Really, it comes down to a few different things. Number 1, it's time versus money. There's always options one or the other. Do you have a lot of money? Do you have a lot of time? Do you have both? Whatever it might be.

If you've got a little bit more money than time, Facebook Ads are a great way to get started with this, or not. You can do that in. You can scale that up very quickly, just start to build that relationship with people. Getting them clicked on ads, and getting them ready to go. It's also the most scalable. Another great way is optimizing your website everywhere by the way. If you do blog post, podcast, anything like that, make sure that you mention your giveaway all the time. Below it, put it all over your site, make sure that it's ready to do, so people are coming in, let's say you have this great blog post you write, at the bottom, remind them that they can get their snowboarding cheat sheet, or remind them they can get their snowboarding video. That's one of the key things, as well, is your own content. Then, out there promoting that.

Another great way is interviews. Once you have a specific topic, narrow it down. Let's just use snowboarding. Let's say that you have this really cool trick that no one else can ... I'm making this up. No one else can learn that ... Well, hopefully someone can learn it. You can teach them it in 30 days or less. I don't know. They're going to be able to do a back flip in 30 days or less on a snowboard. That's going to be your big topic.

Well, that's a great topic now to go out to podcast, blogs, things like that and send emails and say, "Listen, I have this great method for teaching a black flip in snowboarding. I'd love to come on, teach your audience a little bit about it."

Then, any time you do an interview, or anything like that, you're going to get a link back to your website. That's where you use the lead page, or the opt in page. That's one of the key things. You want to make sure, when you're driving traffic, all the traffic goes there.

There's a lot more tips to that. That's kind of a 5 or 6-minute crash course in generating opt ins.

James: That's great, David. One point I want to make about this, I think that when you're thinking about what it is you're going to giveaway, our view at SPF, and we came to this quite early, I'm sure influenced by you, was that it had to be something of standalone value, something that was really good. We should be, it's going to sound a little bit perverse. We should be happy when someone does that and doesn't buy our course, but gets value out of it and improves themselves.

You've got to be doing this to make people better. If you're getting it right at that stage, don't worry about the other stuff. It will follow because of that value.

I would say, don't just give away a few pages, a pdf handout, give away something that's really going to show how amazing you are. The rest will be a lot easier for you after that. It should be of value.

David: I 1,000% agree with that, because at the end of the day, not everyone is going to buy. That's totally fine. You want to be known as the person that has great valuable stuff, so they come back again. I think that that's one of the key things, also.

Webinars are a big thing in this business. I love doing webinars. They're great. That's one of the key things. When you create very valuable free webinars for people, regardless of whether they purchase or not at the end, let's just say they come on and they soak up your valuable content, you want to be known for that. You want to be known that you're giving away great stuff as well.

This is the funny thing, some people think, "Well, I'm scared to give away so many great things because then nobody's going to buy." You've heard that one before?

James: Yeah.

David: Guess what, it is straight up not true. It is a myth, myth, myth, myth, myth, because here's what ends up happening is actually the opposite, the opposite of that.

What happens is people say, and I've done this, too, when I purchase things. Maybe you have as well. I think "Oh my god. If the free stuff was so good, that good, I can't wait to have my mind explode when I buy the paid stuff." That's where you want to be at. You don't want to be the person that gives out the crappy little thing, and they're like, "Well, I don't know. Who cares? This kind of sucks." Then not opting in for anything again. It's a very good point. I totally agree with it.

James: Let's move on to one or 2 other areas. I know you've got to dash here shortly. We mentioned price.

I was thinking immediately when you talked about list sizing, about that conversion of the people who are going to buy your paid product, and how

you price your cost, and what sort of conversion rate you should expect, or should be aiming for. Is there such a thing?

David: We'll talk about pricing and conversion rate is an interesting thing. I was actually talking about this the other day. I was doing a cross fitness competition. What they do is they put out the workouts on a certain day of the week. Then, you do them. Then, you can then redo them. Then, you can redo them as many times as possible, or as many times you can stand between Thursday and Monday, and then you get your score. A lot of people will redo it, and do better, and redo it and do better. They don't really know what to aim for on the first workout. They don't know what's a good time. They don't know that's a bad time. They don't know until you do it.

It's the same thing when it comes to conversion rate for online courses. You really don't know what a "Good" conversion rate is until you actually launch your first time. Then, you have something to compare it against. I'm a big believer in creating your own data, not just going by a random trend that we pull out of the industry, because everybody's different. Everybody's built their list differently. Everyone's been in this business for a different period of time. Everyone has a different reputation, different credibility.

There's so many different factors that go into conversion rate that it wouldn't be fair to say to someone, "You know what, you better have a 3% conversion rate, or that's a failure," because at the end of the day, it's not true.

I'm a big believer in creating your own data, just like you would for a workout, like that, that's measured when it comes to conversion rate. You know what's even funny? We've sold, I don't know, probably in the last few years, at least over 5 million dollars in digital products programs. I couldn't even tell you my exact conversion rate. I can tell you exact conversion rates on each campaign we do. I cannot even give you an overall one.

James: Even within your sphere, those conversion rates may vary?

David: That's right.

James: Different markets and different ...

David: Exactly. Also, list size. The bigger your list gets, the smaller your conversion rate is going to be, but you're going to get more customers. There's a lot of variants there when it comes to conversion rate. That being said, on pricing, which is an interesting huge topic in itself that I could talk about for 100 hours. I'll just give you a couple quick things on that.

Number 1, I'm a big, big believer in premium pricing for online courses, because there's so many other crappy things out there that have lower prices. Online courses, when you position them correctly, are premium. When you're helping people get results, a specific type of audience, I would always encourage people to be in the top 5 to 10% of their market when it comes to their price for their course. Because, here's the thing, it doesn't take a million people to make a living at this. I think that's one of the important things.

A mentor of mine named Ryan Lee pointed this out very early on when I was getting going with online courses. He said, "Listen, David." He said, "It's going to be the same amount of work for you to do a \$97 course as it is for a \$997 course. Why would you not do that and create something extremely valuable for people where you can also, obviously, generate more revenue?" What also ends up happening, and this is key, you get more serious customers. That's the key part of this.

You get more serious customers that are willing to invest in themselves and get results. There was a customer of mine, Karen Pack. She's got a course on productivity, time management. She increased her price big time and had less people sign up, but ended up with 33% more revenue, and over

50% more testimonials, because now, people are thinking to themselves, "Well, this is a significant investment. I'm actually going to follow through with this."

That's one of the key things to keep in mind with this. This is, again, the results-business. Your pricing has to be an investment for folks. You want the serious folks. That's at the end of the day. I know Mark's done that. I'm sure you guys have seen that behind the scenes, that price that you make a big difference with that, as opposed to going after two dollars and five dollars and 7% people.

James: That's great. A final area that I want to talk to you about is the ongoing engagement with your customers. They shouldn't all just be front-loaded to build your list up, make a sale and then move on. To do it right, it's got to be a community that goes on.

David: Yeah. There's a lot of different ways to do that. I'm a big believer in keeping it simple when it comes to this. You don't want to just sell people and then you ride off on a bicycle in the ... I don't know why you'd be on a bicycle. In this scenario, you're on a bicycle.

James: Or your windsurf, or your snowboard.

David: Yeah, or one or the other. You're in some kind of mode of transportation. The thing is what I like to do, number 1, and there's pros and cons of this. We have a very, very vibrant Facebook community for us. A lot of people find a lot of value in doing that with their online courses. That becomes its own. People are making connections. Some people meet up in different cities. That becomes its own little universe of community which is a key thing that can be built over time with their course. Realize, your Facebook group is going to start with just a few people that builds up over time. I remember, for my main course, my group started with just 50, 60 people. Now, it's in thousands when it comes to that. Community is a big aspect that you can have there.

The other thing is content. What people get confused here, and there's not a perfect formula for it, is how much content are you going to be sending people? The way that I like to look at it, I wouldn't send out all that much content all the time.

I invite people to webinars and different things. I send out tips. One of the greatest tips that I had on content was from a guy named Russell Brunson. His tip was that he sends out these emails frequently that he calls "Seinfeld emails." They're really emails about nothing, like the show. Really, it's just sharing stories, or quick tips, or things like that, just little stuff that keeps people engaged, a piece of advice, a case study, or things like that. For me now, I don't necessarily send out content on necessarily a regular basis. However, I've been in this business for a long time. I know for your first several years, let's just call it 3, at least, I would recommend being pretty consistent with the day of the week. Have it where it's wacky Wednesdays and every Wednesday you're going to send something to someone. Send something to your customers.

It might be a "Hello. Here's a funny photo of my dog." It might be "Hello. Here's a great tip." It might be "Here's a great case study." Something like that. That's a great way to build some consistency. Then, as your business evolves, you can obviously get a little more loosey goosey with it. We find that we're always looking for valuable things to send to our customers, both free and paid.

James: That's great, David. I'm aware of the time. The line is just starting to drop out. I guess the broadband is just getting a little bit damp. It's an art, and a science, I think. You've mastered the science end. I love the way that you talk about the approach and the tone of the business and how that should be, because that's, for me, a very important part of it. Just quickly, did you say you think you've turned over 5 million dollars in this?

David: Yes, last year was over two and a half. That was great. Now, yes, in the gambit of it, we're actually well over that now, which is great. What I'm more excited about than that, obviously it's pretty exciting, not going to lie. It's pretty exciting.

We have had hundreds and hundreds of students with just amazing stories and case studies. That's really, what keeps me going personally. I'm not talking about just people that have made 7 figures. By the way, we've had several students doing 7 figures, many, many doing multiple 6, many doing 6 and 5, and the list goes down. I get equally excited about people telling me about their very first sale.

They woke up. They checked the phone. They rolled over on the bed. They saw a receipt in their email box. They jumped up and down and did a little back flip. That's the stuff that gets me excited because where there's one, there's more.

It's the confidence building and the ability to say, "I created something from my brain that other people are now purchasing." That's what I get excited about, is hearing people that launched their first course to 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, and then several years later, we've had plenty of those people that are now doing several hundred thousand, if not into 7 figures. That's what, I think, is very exciting about this business, is the long term potential for people.

James: Well, anyone who has sold a single book will know that feeling, David.

David: Amen.

James: Brilliant. Thank you so much indeed for joining us. It's been a delight to talk to you, David. I am sure that we will talk again as time goes on. We'll keep a close eye on ... Oh yeah, we should say where you'd like people to go to learn more about yourself, risetothetop.com.

David: You could go to the risetothetop.com and also createawesomeonlinecourses.com. Either way will lead you some way shape of form that way. I would love to see you over there. Let me know also if you hear from me that you heard about us on this podcast, for sure.

James: Absolutely. Great, David. We're going to let you go. Thank you so much.

David: All right. I appreciate it.

James: David Siteman Garland. I think there are quite a few David Garlands on the internet, hence his Siteman in the middle of that. Like a few of the people we've spoken to, when you hear him and you hear his enthusiasm and his attention to detail, it's easy to see why he thrives in this area, in this self-starting, self-improving area.

Very, very valuable set of information and a clear direction for people who've got a non-fiction idea and a look into ... I was going to say revenue-ize it. I'm just going to basically make that word up. Turn it into something that they can pay the wages.

Mark: Monetize.

James: Monetize. There you go. That is just a made up word that's been used more often, so it's starting to sound like a real word.

Mark: Exactly.

James: Good guy.

Mark: Very good guy. He knows his onions, as we say over here. Definitely someone that people can learn a lot from. I hope that was an interesting interview.

James: Definitely was for us. We have one final part in this mini series on non-fiction, that's with Ankur Nagpal. Anchor is the founder of Teachable, one of the founders. They've been hugely successful in this area. They provide a platform that we rate, we use it, we find it very smooth. It gives us the least amount of hassle. It presents the course in a really nice way. They go to Tech Crunch, I think initially for the ... They're funding one of the big tech startup funding contest. They won a couple million dollars there. I think they got another couple of million dollars just a few weeks ago this year. It just goes to show, this area is a very, very hot area at the moment.

He's next week. That will be the final part of it. I don't know what we're doing the week after. If you're a novelist and have absolutely no intention ever of doing anything in the non-fiction realm, Podcast 21 will be back to fiction, we can promise you that.

Speaker 2: You've been listening to the Self Publishing Formula Podcast. Visit us at 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 will see you next time.