

## **EPISODE 21: TAPPING INTO TRADITIONAL PR AS AN INDIE AUTHOR**

Announcer 1: Hello, and welcome to Podcast number 21 from the self publishing formula. This week we're starting "Out and About."

Announcer 2: Two writers. One just starting out, the other a best seller. Join James Blanche 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.

Announcer 3: Please do not leave cases or parcels unattended anywhere on the station. Any unattended articles are likely to be removed without warning.

Mark: It is Friday morning. It's cold and it's early, about 8:00. It's misty in Salisbury and I'm just about to get onto a train to travel into London to go and see a PR professional. I've always had mixed feelings about paying for PR. My view on things is it's usually possible to pay for things, or to arrange things about yourself and I've been pretty lucky with the things I've been able to arrange over the course of the last couple of years. I had a big article in Forbes, which was a real boost for my credibility within the author community. That resourced just at London book fair last year after I did some work for Amazon, on their store. I did some QA's for them. They were looking for someone to speak to Forbes and I was the person they gave a polite kick up the backside to go and do that, and that was wonderful. Since then, other things have come in off the back of that. Those things I've been able to arrange myself. Another good example of something that just happened serendipitously, and this was through the Forbes article, I was contacted a couple weeks ago by a producer for a Radio Four documentary. Radio Four is a big national radio station in the UK, for those not in the UK. They want me to be a mentor on a five part series that will be

spread across a week, where a rookie novelist tries to self publish, or looks at publishing in general. Obviously I'm up for that. It will give me more credibility, more exposure, so I'm definitely interested in that.

Bubbling away in the background all the while has been the thought that I could do something additional, some rocket fuel could be added to build up my standing, both within the author community for people that are writing books and need help with getting them out there, and also for sale of my books. It's certainly a big byproduct of my advertising has been a big increase in sales as you'd expect, but not just off the ads, just my brand awareness in general has led to an increase in sales. That's something that I'm interested in too.

I spoke to my agent and asked him to recommend a firm of professionals that I could go and see. I figured I'd just go by myself. I got a few quotes, eye watering quotes. In one case it was 15,000 pounds up to 20,000 pounds, for a performance that isn't guaranteed, which bugs me a bit. I'm not comfortable with paying something when there's no, what we'd call, key performance indicators. In other words, I hate that kind of language. I want to know what I'm getting. What's the bang for the buck? They weren't prepared to give me that, so it made me a little bit nervous.

We'll see how this goes this morning. I'll go to the meeting and then I'm going to meet James afterwards and we'll sit down and have a chat about how it went, what my thoughts are, what's been promised, what isn't promised, maybe even mention the cost if that's something I can mention if it's not confidential. We'll just chat about PR in general and what is and isn't possible. With that, I've got a coffee, the trains just about to pull into the station, so I'm going to get over there right now, sit down and get ready and let's see how it goes.

James: Okay, Mark promised that I would be invited along at some point. I wasn't, I noticed, invited for the important meeting with the PR people, but here we are.

**We're in a rather curious place Mark, aren't we? This is your old haunt, here isn't it?**

Mark: Yeah. I used to write, five or six years ago, there's a place called The Jeffrey Museum in east London and it's well worth a visit if you like what houses would have been like over the last 4 or 500 years. Perhaps I'm not selling it the best. People don't hear from my advice on places to visit in London. They probably want to know more about what we've just been talking about.

James: Yeah, but it's nice to set the scene. I think my adolescent daughter and young son would probably not forgive me for bringing them here because it's quite dry. For us, our age, it's lovely and who knows, if you're a writer this is exactly the sort of place you might become inspired with ideas. Anyway, as you say, we're not here to talk about that today.

We're here to talk about PR, which is a bit of a dark art in many people's eyes. You set the scene as you left Salisbury to why you were having this meeting today.

**Let me just ask your impression, having had the meeting, is this something you think you want to move forward with?**

Mark: Definitely. I was really impressed. I've been thinking about it for a while, as I mentioned earlier, about PR, whether it was something I should do organically or whether we should get some professionals in to help. It's worth mentioning up front now that we're looking at this as a two step process. Part of it will be for my books, half of it will be for my books, and half of it will be for the nonfiction business that we've built at SPF.

I was very impressed. It was in a very trendy office near King's Cross with a very low door that I walloped my head on as I went in. They are very very nice, very switched on. I had a meeting with a couple of them, including

their proprietor. I was very impressed they'd done their research. They knew about me. They knew about my books. I'm definitely interested in taking it on.

**James: What are they going to do?**

Mark: That's a good question. That's one of the questions I had. They've already put together a very broad based approach about the kinds of places that they'll try and place stories, so that could be offline press, newspapers, it could be radio, something you know lots about and the TV, something else you know about. We talked about my story, which is, I suppose, reasonably interesting. They are more interesting than other self publishers, but the whole writing all those books on the train in 2014, making that Forbes article. That's always been a big thing to be able to find me is what Forbes said about me after the London book fair last year. We just kind of talked about that, what it might look like. The thing that PR's are not going to do is they're not going to guarantee press coverage. It's not something that's in their gift. They're half of the equation.

What they do is they go out to media organizations and try to place the stories. They can't promise you that they will get results. I got the impression that they were very confident this morning that this is the kind of story that should be able to sell quite easily.

James: Okay, I should have added in the beginning that we're in the café section, so reasonable noises may occur, but my sandwich is about to arrive as well, which I'm looking forward to.

There's a business decision for you to make and you would have listened carefully to that. I've got a couple of questions before I ask you about where you see the worth and how you're going to measure that. Particularly, if you were going to process two areas, Self Publishing Formula also Mark Dawson the author, how they present you has got to be carefully thought out.

It's got to be quite specific to sell well in terms of stories and generalities don't sell well.

Mark: I think what we're looking at now is my profile and it's raising my profile. I'm reasonably well known now within the author community, but it's a big community and it's growing every day. This is just talking about the SPF side of the business. We've got five figures worth of authors on our main list now, but that doesn't even touch the surface of how many people are thinking about getting into the space, thinking about doing advertising. Even in the basic, entry level stuff, there's a huge amount of people who are interested in this now. One of the things I said this morning was that it's very easy for us who are within the industry, and steep within it, to assume level of knowledge that would be common for everyone.

I had a chat with a Radio Four producer who was interested in doing a documentary about me and he knew nothing about self publishing. This was with the benefit of some research because he was talking to me, but he still knew nothing about what was possible, so that was very instructive I thought.

Getting the message out, the origin story about how I went from working with you at the BBFC and getting into a position where I've had a million downloads of my books now and earned a significant income. That's a compelling story that people would be interested in hearing.

On the other side of the business, in my book business, raising my profile as an author is something that I'm very interested in doing. They've worked with some big authors, including one other very big Indie author, whose name eludes me now, but it's an erotica author who hit the New York Times list without knowing it. He hit number one on the New York Times list without knowing it. Off the back of E. L. James' successful Fifty Shades, and they're still doing really really well. They've got a campaign that they've run for her. She's been in all the big magazines, the big newspapers. That's obviously a useful analog for what we're going to look at with what they

might be able to do for me. As we would call this now, in March, the London Book Fair's coming up.

They're heavily involved with the book fair. I'm talking on the Amazon stand again. It's the perfect opportunity to get into things like the book seller over here, and to spin that story off and have interviews. That's where I had the interview for the Forbes article was after the LBF last year, so there's lots of opportunities for that now. It's a perfect time for us to be looking at what might be possible.

James: Okay, and in terms of other authors, I'm guessing somebody who's writing their first book, like me, probably doesn't need to invest in PR at this stage.

### **But do you see this as an important step up at some point in an authors career?**

Mark: I think you get to a point where you can only do so much yourself. Everything that I've placed so far, I've been interviewed in The Financial Times, across BBT radio, I've had an article in Telegraph, the Forbes article, all that kind of stuff. That was either stuff that I organized myself or stuff that came to me, perhaps through Amazon's press office on a couple of occasions, or other times people who somehow Googled self publishing and have come to me, probably through the Forbes article, it's rated very very highly.

But there does come a point where you need a bit of accelerant. I'm not a PR professional. Number one, I wouldn't know how to pitch a story to newspaper. Number two, I just don't have time. It's not something I have the capacity to fit in. I'm at the point now where I think financially it's a decision I'm able to make. I think the benefits are potentially quite big for both sides of our business.

I heard examples this morning from other authors and the campaigns that they run. You can give me the the Daily Mail on a Saturday, you can sell enough books just off of that to hit the top of their best seller charts. Same goes for your TV on the sofas, on breakfast TV. That kind of thing is really powerful. It works very well for traditional publishers.

The key thing is, no one that I'm aware of in this country, a bit different in the states, no one in this country is really making a big play out of the fact that it's possible to do all of that yourself. There's a really good story there and they could see that. I could tell that the thing that's compelling is that I'm selling more books than traditionally published authors, lots of them, with no backup, just me and my laptop and the train.

James: An important thing to remember when we're talking about this, we are talking very much about new media, which is the area that we operate in. But unlike the PR, you'll be aiming at traditional media, so it won't be surprising if this is a revelation to the things like how people buy books. Purchasing books has changed because they're still printing newspapers and magazines and struggling a little bit to get along. You mention the Mail. That actually does have a very successful online presence, as does the Guardian, but a lot of the other newspapers are not really sure where to go on that front.

You're pitching to the old industry and still using them for what they're worth, which is to broaden your exposure beyond new media.

Mark: Also, I know from my own sampling of my audience, that my readers skew towards the older end of the spectrum, so say between 40 and up, with a preponderance probably between 50 and 65. They're older, not necessarily therefore the one's that you'd assume to be the most new media savvy. They might not be the ones likely to see a Facebook ad for example, although lots of them are, I know that a lot of them are.

This is potentially a very interesting way and a very powerful way to access a big slice of the population who I can be reasonably confident will like the books just the same as other readers who heard about me from ads, or

from Amazon or those kinds of means. There's potentially a big broadening of my audience.

**James: Your books are in print as well, which is probably quite important here.**

Mark: They are. Yeah, they are in print. I don't sell, I don't know how many, 1,000, 2,000 copies a month maybe of print books. The thing with print is they're in print, but they're online, so you can't go into a book store very easily and just ... They're not sitting next to James Patterson's books. You have to go to Amazon and order them, so yes I can cater to reader who don't like reading on e readers.

James: I'm just thinking if you're trying to capture a market who won't see a Facebook ad for it, but they probably will go onto Amazon and order a book, but they probably won't have a Kindle, they might not have a Kindle. There's certainly somebody in that category.

Mark: Yeah, that's right.

James: Other e readers are available.

Mark: Yes, absolutely they are. I know that we've spoken to Adam Craft, he's done very well with ads as a result of doing what we've been doing. I know he's seen a massive spike in his print sales, we've really seen it, much more than I sell, but that's another way people can access my stories that I haven't really exploited yet.

James: Going back to the figures, two answers before, the bottom line in your business. So there's a bottom line here.

**Do you know how much this is going to cost you and do you have a timescale for making that back and how are you going to measure that?**



Mark: That's interesting. They've quoted a figure which I'm probably not going to mention now because I think it's confidential and I don't want to go into too much detail, but it's four figures and I was quoted ... I mentioned a couple figures from others that I spoke to. I was recommended a firm in Eastland and then they came back with 15,000 pounds, or \$22,000, something like that, which was a lot of money. I was uncomfortable with that.

The thing is, they won't give you guarantees as I mentioned earlier. I said this earlier, I hate KPI and that kind of acronym, but that is key. You need something to measure how affective it is, at least in terms of have you had an article placed this month in exchange for the big spend that I've invested and they weren't able to give me that. I wasn't happy with that, so it was significantly less than that, but I was very impressed with them. They're very professional, they've got a lot of experience with traditional and new media.

In terms of how I measure it, it's difficult. It's not the same as with a Facebook ad. You can measure to the last cent. You can attribute sales directly to a particular ad, exactly how much you've spent, exactly how much you've made so you can calculate exactly what your return is. With this only half of the equation is visible. You know what you've spent. It's difficult, probably actually impossible to quantify the precise affect of that investment.

What you would have to do and what we will look at doing, for us, for SPF, we'd be looking at, does that accelerate the growth of our main list that we can measure. For me, for books, what I'd be looking at is benchmarking. I'd be benchmarking what I would make before the campaign starts and after. If everything else is equal, you can be reasonably confident that differences can be contributed to the campaign that you're running.

James: We can see an audience who you might not attract through your existing advertising that you can get to with your author books, your books

as an author. In terms of the factual side, the nonfiction side, this is something we talk about lots in the Podcast. For many of our authors it's an area that they're actually considering getting into and it's an area we have with SPF, but the people who will respond positively to that are probably in the digital space only.

**You're using PR money to go to old media consumers to sell them something that's new media.**

Mark: Yeah, that's true, but you're amplifying your message. It's probably fair to say that most people who are interested in self publishing are going to be at least conversant with the technology, They certainly should be or they're going to have a difficult time with it. But they also read newspapers, and they also listen to the radio and watch TV in the morning. Anything that can increase my profile and my authority in that space is going to be a good thing.

James: We're going to get you on the sofa with Susanna, who's one of the breakfast presenters here in the UK.

Mark: Is this the one you fancy?

James: I just find her intellectually stimulating.

Mark: Yes, that would be a goal. I was quite close, actually, to being on breakfast TV a long time ago when I had my second book published, when I put the boot in for the lawyers because I was a lawyer at the time. When that came out I was contacted by the BBC and said would I come onto the breakfast show to talk about how awful lawyers are. Given as I was just about to be sacked I decided I better keep a low profile. I haven't done that, but I would be completely up for that. I'm not frightened by going on TV or the radio. We've been on the radio before.

James: Yeah, indeed, and we do a Podcast every week, so we're experts. If you get onto Jimmy Kimmel I'm definitely coming along to that as well. There's a couple of decisions to make and I think this is something people might be interested in as we progress. We will go through this together and try to work out whether it's going to be worth it. It may be like all ventures, particularly PR, it is a long term thing. I kind of work in the PR market and video production. I'm just off to another meeting in a moment to commission a video for a client in east London here, and we always say to people, "Don't blow your wad on one big all singing and dancing moment, and then do nothing for two years. You've got to commit to the long term."

I would personally say you've got to commit to this for at least 12 months, a whole year of this. See where it goes. Don't worry about your figures for the first 6 months, but then start to get interested in how things looked 12 months ago when you started.

Mark: That's a significant investment and that is a pretty decent chunk of change for a 12-month retainer, which is what it would be. But I think it would be interesting for other authors anyway, just to see, because you can place this kind of stuff yourself. It isn't impossible.

I've done it a few times and if I had a bit more time I would probably learn how to do it a bit better so I didn't need to bring anybody else in. But it could be interesting to see if we could get a few nice articles placed so we can try and track the affect of that.

I'll talk about the experience of being interviewed or writing the article and we'll talk about the affect that it has on book sales and signups for SPF, and whether we get more Podcasters. There's all that kind of stuff. We can be completely transparent about that, so that other authors can have a think about, if they're at the level that I'm at, whether they want to invest in a third party to run that for them or if they'd like to invest a bit of time in doing it themselves. I think that's something that we can give them some help with.

James: At some point I imagine we're going to interview these PR people as part of our Podcast. They should be up for that. Good, okay, well I can do some media training for you on how to appear on the site for breakfast television. I have to tell you, my retainer is obligatory, it's going to put the PR people to shame.

I'm looking forward to my sandwich, and I've got a meeting to go to, but thanks and we will follow this story. It's all about the story.

It was loud in that café with Mark. I do want to first of all say, that what I normally like to do for recording conditions is have ultimate control of the room and the environment. I felt I couldn't stand up and tell everyone to shut up once we had our conversation, so we should say it was loud in the café.

Mark: If you'd done that you wouldn't have gotten your sandwiches.

James: I wouldn't have gotten my sandwiches, or if I had gotten the sandwiches I probably would have been weary of eating them. Anyway, fascinating place to go to, one of your old haunts as you said there. When did we record that? How far away are we now?

Mark: Goodness. You put me on the spot there. It must be three months ago. Something like that.

James: It was about three months. That was beginning for you, and the adventure as you explained as we were talking, and something had been on your mind and there was a lot of unknowns going into it. We've got twelve weeks or so of results to look at now. We can go through those. I think the first thing we should perhaps look at is how much this venture has cost you, and a slight warning that it is a high figure. You told me at the time, and obviously it's something we were going to do together, so I was a little taken aback by the cost of this. Most people are going to think wow, this is so out of my depth, but actually, for some people, this will be

potential investment. But there's a lot you can learn from what we did here that will be relevant even if you're not going to spend this sort of money. Should we make people faint by telling people how much you paid for this publicity service?

Mark: Yes. We paid for it really. We split the cost between the two sides of the business. On one hand there's my books, on the other hand there's the nonfiction side of the business with the self publishing formula. The cost was 5,000 pounds plus tax, so it came in about 6,000 and we split that 50/50. I got an email this morning from my accountant James, and he said, "The PR was expensive at 12,000 pounds wasn't it Mark?" I was like, what? I paid them twice.

James: Oh. Oh my.

**Mark: That's great. Anyway, they're paying me back the duplicate amount.**

James: This is why I do the figures.

Mark: I know. I know. I tend not to get involved with that kind of stuff. It was reasonably expensive, but not as expensive as others I was quoted. I mentioned one when we had our chat that was coming in at around about 15,000, which was for the year, but was still was a bit on the expensive side I thought.

James: We've learned some things going through the process and I think we'll come to our conclusions towards the end of this discussion whether it was worth it or not, but there are other ways I guess of doing it.

I know of at least one of our students actually who's doing really well and as good income from his selling and he got a little bit at the similar quotes that he got and he decided to go solo. Basically he put out favors to his friends and family to see if he can get some help getting some publicity

and he works at it that way. That's the other way of doing it, but what did we get out of this? What did your side of the business get out of it?

**What did we get out of it as SPF, and was it worth it. Where do we start? Should we look at some of the actual tangible results?**

Mark: I suppose that's what it comes down to is what actually was arranged as a result of the campaign that was run. I think we did pretty well. I think we did get very good money. We had quite a big interview on the online section of the Telegraph. That came, the Telegraph for those not in the UK is one of the big broadsheet newspapers over here, and they sent the reports down to Salisbury and was with me for a couple of hours. We had a good chat about self-publishing and the industry and how I do things. That ran and that was great.

James: I thought the photography was fantastic in that article.

Mark: Yeah. I don't know, who took those photos?

James: I never got a credit. Anyway ...

Mark: No bitterness there from Mr. Blatch. The next one was the Daily Mail, so that's, unless this has changed, it certainly was the most trafficked newspaper website in the world. Daily Mail was very very big, worldwide for that, usually with a never ending stream of celebrity gossip. But they put an article in, I can't remember what the section was, but it was one of the finance sections, so they asked me some questions on bits and pieces to do with the financial side of self publishing. That was great.

When I was interviewed by Podcast network, they called themselves manacle. They have a pretty big worldwide reach, very professional offices in London. I went down there a couple of weeks ago. I think that came out this week, so two or three days before we were recording this. That was great.

This was also running over the course of the London Book Fair. The PR handler, I suppose you call her, that I was assigned, marched me to the book seller offices at London Book Fair, introduces me to the guy who owns it and runs it.

On the back of that I spoke at the media conference about two weeks ago. That was me on a stage in front of 500 PR professionals from the traditional publishing industry, which was good fun, and a good chance to show them how Indies do things around there. I think that went down quite well and if I was in the business for extra work coming off the back of that, I would've been able to probably get a new job. I had several people asking me to come into London and talk to them about what I do with social media.

James: Hey, can't afford you.

Mark: I told them that they couldn't and I don't want the job, so I walked away.

James: I hope you didn't say I didn't get out of bed for that and just walked off and left them standing there. Okay, the Daily Mail if you're not in the UK, you may not be familiar with these, although the Mail does have a good global reach now. They are big hitter in this part of the world. I mean, I think the Daily Mail may be the most read newspaper as well as being one of the worlds biggest websites. This is definitely the equivalent to the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post level of paper, but here in the UK and a little wider than that.

We got a couple of other hits didn't we that didn't necessarily come from that, but perhaps indirectly.

**Amazon put you forward for some things and because your profile is raised elsewhere and it makes you a more attractive proposition to other entities doesn't it?**

Mark: It does, yes. Amazon willed me out now and again to do bits and pieces to talk about self publishing with an Amazonian, so I was at London Book Fair again this year on the stage for them a couple times, which was great. They had an even celebrating Shakespeare's birthday, whenever that was.

James: April 23rd.

Mark: I was going to say April 23rd, so yes.

James: He was born and died on the same day.

Mark: You're the man we need for a pop quiz. I went down to London and I did some down the line radio interviews for about ten or eleven local radio stations in the UK, some bigger than others. That was pretty good.

Off the back of that, Amazon introduced me to some journalists at the Times and they ran a very lengthy back page piece on me in their fame and fortune section, which was quite amusing, but that was great as well.

James: I used to be on the other side of that. Of course I was a local radio presenter in the UK, and you get someone who's on their 14th interview of the day, sitting in a cubicle in London.

Mark: Yep.

James: Normally people are pretty good at keeping the energy level up through that. As I said, it's different for us to say they were a result of the publicity we have, they weren't a direct result of, but on the other hand people will say, oh yeah.

They'll do a bit of Googling, that Daily Mail article comes up and suddenly it's a yes rather than a no.



Mark: That's the thing. In terms of the building authority, that was one of the purposes was to build my recognition within the author community. If people are thinking about taking one of the courses that we do then they're going to want to know a bit about the instructor.

It's all well and good going onto a sales page and reading stuff that we've put together. That's not necessarily going to be something that they're going to, that might not be enough for them to persuade them to go ahead. If they do a bit of research and they Google, they're going to see the Forbes article that came up a couple years ago, or any of these ones that we've placed since then. It's all very useful.

Of course we can do a page on our website with a credentials page. That's very helpful as well. It's a good calling card for people who want to come and check out a little bit more about my story and just to satisfy themselves that I sometimes know what I'm talking about.

James: Sometimes.

Mark: Not always.

James: On the nonfiction side, it's easier I think to see the immediate benefits of this and that credibility that you get as you say as people are about to invest in a chunk of change for a course, to see you validated by big hitters like Forbes and the Daily Mail, could just be the difference between buying and to buying.

There may well be people who listen to Podcast who did their due diligence on you, saw that you were credible, saw that you had attracted the publicity and interest elsewhere. That translates itself into commercial value for us.

Move on a little bit to why you started it. The purpose of that, and then try and bring this around to your career as a fiction author and whether it also gave you tangible results or anything that you can quantify.

Let's just start with why we did this. Obviously we talked about this before you invested the money in it. That authority was one of the things we're looking for. Authority as a figure and a thought leader. I hate using those expression but people use them.

**A thought leader in the self publishing space was very important for selling the cause and I think there's a big tick in that particular box.**

Mark: That was one of the main aims on that side of the business was to do that and I'm happy that was met. I think we got good value for money for that part of the equation. I was selling books, but the other part, so the book selling part of my business, that's a bit more difficult to quantify because the difference between this and digital marketing, so things like Facebook ads, Twitter ads, Youtube, that kind of stuff, it's much more difficult to track conversions. We can track how effective a Facebook ad is by linking it directly to sales that are made after people have viewed that ad, and you can quantify that all the way down to the last cent.

They're very very accountable in that sense. It's a bit more difficult with studying more fluffy, traditional media tactics, and this is exactly what this kind of PR is. Its very difficult to determine how many sales have been generated as a result of a media campaign.

There are ways to do it. You can benchmark and do a before and after comparison, and other anecdotal methods whereby I've had a few emails from readers who have said they've enjoyed the Milton books and they found out about me after seeing an article about me in the Times. I'm happy enough to say that it has had an effect.

Have I seen a long jump to the top of the best seller lists? No, I haven't. The agency that we went with puts out a few more campaigns that are like this.

They've had another self published writer. I can't remember her name at the time, but I'm hoping to get her on the Podcast. She writes erotica, pretty much, like E.L. James territory. She had a big feature in the Mail and she did launch into the top ten on Amazon after that came out, so I think it is possible to get that kind of result.

James: You've got to think. One of the things that's happening at the moment is that self publishing is growing, exponentially every year, therefore all the more important to separate yourself from the crowd. To get some edge over your competition. Something that's going to turn that person that's browsing your book into a purchaser.

**I would think more important is getting this type of mainstream publicity.**

Mark: This has been the preserve of traditional publishing for a long time and I don't think that's right. If I wanted to get a traditional deal I probably could at this point. I choose not to, but I also want to demonstrate that it's possible for independent authors to use the same kind of tools that traditionally published authors have had at their disposal for a long time. There's something to be said for that.

I am a bit of an evangelist for independent publishing, so it's important for me to also be out there shouting as loud as I can for authors that may not be able to get a traditional deal. Just so that they know there's another way they can get their books and reach readers. You don't need to rely on gatekeepers anymore. It would be putting it too hard to say that there was an altruistic motive for that, but that is a nice side effect of this is that everything is increasing awareness of different ways to get stories out there. That's in the back of my mind all the time as well.

James: We shouldn't forget that whilst we talk to our friends like Joanna Penn and Nick Stephenson and so on, about the self publishing revolution

and how it's democratizing and it's freeing you up when all the people say no to you, which doesn't happen in self publishing.

But readers can be removed from that and not necessarily realize this is happening and realize that this amazing choice in diversity is available and the old gatekeepers are gone.

That kind of evangelist can actually have a positive effect there as well, and just helping to raise the old perception of self publishing, which is vanity publishing, and people understanding that it's the new smart way the successful writer is now choosing self publishing.

Mark: It's for readers and writers, so we're increasing awareness for readers that there are new story tellers that they can go to get stories that they'd enjoy reading. Also for writers, as I said, just educating writers that they don't need to get an agent anymore. It's not really necessary. That they don't need to get a publisher, that they can just do things themselves. You're right, it is very easy in our little enclosed publishes.

Most of the people that listen to this Podcast don't need to be told that self publishing is a viable way to get their bits and pieces out to new readers. But there are plenty of other writers, who as you say, are still equating independent publishing with vanity publishing, even though the two couldn't be more different. That's a message that needs to be gotten across.

I saw that reinforced when I was talking to these journalists and they couldn't believe what was possible these days with independent publishing. These are guys working on arts desks, finance desks. They just didn't realize the kind of success that writers can have these days, you know the people like the Marie Forces, the Bella Andres, those kind of guys. The kind of success that was possible was just completely eye opening for those guys when I spoke to them.

It bares remembering from people like us, that whilst we might be in the Vanguard, we shouldn't assume that everyone has the same level of knowledge that we do.

James: No, definitely not, and you know I used to work in the media and the newsroom a few years ago. When I started it, newsrooms were leading edge. They were the place to be. You knew everything. You read the papers every day. Actually, in my lifetime to where we are now, I see a lot of those newsrooms being a little old fashioned, a little bit stuck in the past. They're in a bubble.

Funny enough, at our political hearing, we just had this big referendum vote in the UK, and one of the things that came out of that is there is a "them and us" for the people who are on social media and discussing things at this edge all the time and the rest of the country. Well, not the rest of the country, but there is definitely, there's work to be done in people understanding how things are changing and I'm not sure the newsroom is necessarily there anymore. They're wondering. They're finding out at the same time as other people.

There are these little pockets of industry, self-publishing is definitely one of them, which is disruptive, it's changing and it's slowly having its impact, slowly getting known for what's happening.

Mark: Yes, absolutely. Kind of wrapping this up, you mentioned other ways of doing this. People spending 5 grand on something like this is a lot of money for most people. It's a lot of money for us, so we thought about it quite carefully before we pulled the trigger on this, but there are other ways.

We mentioned Amazon reached out and got me in front of some very influential journalists, so that was great. The other author, we might as well name him, Mr. Croft. It must be time for his weekly mention. He's done very well. He got really excellent coverage on The Guardian. The Guardian,

another great big newspaper over here has another very well trafficked website, and I think he was in the front page of The Guardian's website for the best part of the afternoon.

He was in the comments, and he was quite punchy in the comments as well. It was very entertaining. He was basically fighting the good fight in the community, explaining to people, particularly jealousy, was involved from some of the commenters, but Adam put up a really good fight, and because of that it got loads and loads of traffic.

And then he was invited back to be interviewed by Rachel Abbott, who we spoke to at London book fair, another very big selling Indie over here in the UK. He did that and then he reached out to local television through someone else, someone on this Podcast perhaps, and was on the BBC as well. That was all through him picking up the phone, or asking, in the latter case, asking you to pick up the phone. That worked quite well too.

James: Yeah. I got him in touch with BBC local television reporter and it was up to him whether he did anything with it. As Adam's motto, there's no harm in asking, and he asked everybody, and he continues to do that and he's had some really good success. The Guardian, again, is a big hitter newspaper in the UK.

It is possible to do it, but it does require a lot of graft on your side of things. The PR company that we use, very good, and you're really happy with them. I'm going to have a meeting with them soon so I can get to know them as well, but I know that from what you've told me they're sharp people. They are thoughtful and creative in the way they're approaching things, but PR is itself a very old fashioned industry. It hasn't changed a lot in decades and it's possible these guys and the way they're thinking, the way we've talked about potential business ventures together are at the Vanguard of that industry changing a bit. It may in time become more accessible on a wider scale. I'm not quite sure how. Who knows how it's

going to work out, but it might not be this type of price to access that type of market.

Mark: They are pretty switched on it, They've mentioned that they're interested in reaching out to Indie authors, not at that kind of price I suspect. Maybe putting together some learning's that Indies can use to reach out to news desks or TV stations, all that kind of stuff. They're pretty open to that kind of thing, so we will have a chat with them, and hopefully get them on the podcast as well. That could be quite interesting.

James: Yeah. Make it accessible. It is a bit of a dark art, PR. There's a way of doing it and there's some tricks to it, so some expert advice would definitely go a long way I think on that front. You and I, and our missing partner who's never on the Podcast, we'll have to get him on one day, John Dyer.

Mark: No, no, no. We don't want to do that.

James: No, let's not ruin it. We've talked this through and for us there is going to be a further relationship with this organization and we're happy with the results so far, I'm going to press forward with that, so it's been a successful venture from my point of view.

### **In terms of your book as well, your author side of things, are you happy to continue?**

Mark: Yeah. I need to work out exactly what a continuing routine would look like from their prospective and my prospective. I'm not comfortable, I've never been comfortable with just paying someone to act on a retainer and there being no metric that I can measure success against. I'm not going to just pay someone in the off chance that something will come of it. I need to see regular coverage, but if that's something that we feel we can agree on then I probably would continue. I think it is useful. We had a

couple of quite close calls with getting me on Breakfast Television, which would have been great.

There was a Saturday show in the UK on one of their terrestrial channels, they were quite interested too. ITV were interested to get me on their morning sofa. That could be a game changer, so that would be something that I would continue to press for. Their view is they know who I am now. They were interested enough to take a nibble last time. It didn't quite come off for a number of reasons, but maybe it just needs to be re-framed in a different way, so we'll keep that one on the back burner.

James: Yeah. One of the things that happens, and I can tell you from being in the newsroom, and occasionally you had to tank programs and deciding is that sometimes you don't choose somebody because they've been on elsewhere. You always want to be original as a program. If you look at it from that prospective, you do have to take the longer term aspect of this into account.

You can't expect all your hits to happen in the same eight week period because newsrooms don't want to be seen as sheep, even though we do all follow the newspapers or whatever.

I think that's been of use to people. Some live blogging along the way of that particular journey, it was new territory for you. A little bit of the old business for me, but seeing it from the other side. It's been interesting.

Mark: I think so. I've learned a lot over the course of this little experiment, so we'll probably keep doing it and it's something we can check back in with a bit later if things develop further.

James: Now, we've had nonfiction for three weeks in a row. We've talked about publicity for self published authors today. Next week we're going right back to the heart of the self publishing industry and making sales and building mailing lists. We're going to talk about what's hot in terms of what's online, what's available for you in marketing, particularly with a focus



on the social media advertising platforms and to compare and contrast them to see what's working and what' not.

Next week's is going to be a really useful episode. We'll probably do this at least once a year, perhaps more often than that we will just delve in because that's how quickly the industry turns over and changes. We've got some good stuff to talk about, some recent campaigns and some recent reports from some of our authors on what's working. That's a good one to look forward to next week. That will be episode number 22, but from us, bathing in the reflective glory if your publicity, I am. You're bathing in the reflective glory of your own publicity and your hot tub.

Mark: I was just going to say I'm about to go and bathe my children.

James: That's not necessary. Okay. We'll see you next week.

Mark: Okay. Bye bye.

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