

EPISODE 22: USING SOCIAL MEDIA ADS FOR EFFECTIVE LEAD GENERATION AND BOOK SALES

Speaker 1: Hello, and welcome to podcast #22 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 telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello, welcome along to our weekly podcast on the SPF with Mark, and James. We are wilting, Mark, aren't we, because it is almost 28 degrees in the UK.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, it's great. It was quite warm yesterday, and this week is apparently going to be very, very hot. By our standards, anything over 20 is hot. Anything over 25, you're starting to get into heat wave territory.

James Blatch: I played cricket yesterday in a wide open field with no shade, and people were wilting.

Mark Dawson: Lords, James?

James Blatch: It wasn't Lords, unfortunately. There's plenty of shade at Lords. I could stand in front of the stands, but the kind of grounds I play on don't have stands, and people watching, but anyway, it was a very good match.

Mark Dawson: How did you do, more importantly?

James Blatch: We lost the game by nine runs, and I think I scored about nine so I didn't really help very much. We had a bit of a collapse in the middle. I stayed in for several overs, but couldn't get the ball off the square

very easily, and then I was caught trying to push ahead. It's the story of my cricket life.

It's a heat wave in the UK, and when I say heatwave, it's just like normal sun for anybody else in the world, but it's enough for us. We have decided, we have a lot of interviews this year, and we are going to, from time to time, break away from that format, and talk a little bit in more detail something that's pertinent, and specific to authors, and we always want each podcast episode to be of value to authors. What we're doing today is we're going to talk specifically about paid advertising.

Paid advertising is, without question, an essential part of the armory of a modern self-published author, who is trying to get on, and is trying to build a business. You can't sit there. Unfortunately, the days of having your Facebook page, and your Twitter feed organically growing, and sharing, and getting you sales, and getting you signups to your mailing list are gone.

The platforms which we're going to talk about in more detail have made sure of that, because it's partly how they're operating now in the commercial sector. They all started off perhaps without adverts; Twitter, certainly, and Facebook, I think, introduced advertising several years into its life, but they are now very much focused on that as a business; but, don't despair, because it's something that can be used, and can be leveraged to your advantage.

This is about paid advertising, so if you're an author, you're sticking some dollars into advertising; where should those dollars go?

Where is the best bang for your buck? What should you be focusing on? What's hot, and what is not in this world?

Mark Dawson: That pretty much sums it up. We're going to look at some of the ones that you'd expect; Facebook is the platform that I'm best known

for. I've got a course on that. **We'll be completely frank, and open about what's working, what isn't working with Facebook right now. We'll also look at Twitter. And James will talk about YouTube**, because he is in the SPF lab at the moment doing lots of experiments on getting YouTube ads to work.

I'll talk about BookBub ads. I've had quite a lot of experience with those now, and we'll touch on other bits, and pieces like Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest maybe, and anything else that comes to mind.

James Blatch: We should say this is not just the ramblings of two British men who are overheating in the sun. We have a community now of SPF authors, which runs into the thousands, and we have a lively discussion in social media, and other areas. We've had quite a few guys, and girls on over the time of the podcast. All of that is feeding into the state of play of where we are. This is, by the way something that we should do regularly, because it is a quite fast changing environment, and from time to time, we'll take some time out just to say the mechanics of where your money should be going; where is it working?

Okay, without further adieu, I think we'll press on. You mentioned, Mark, that you've created a course on Facebook ads, and some people may think, "Of course, you're going to recommend them, because you've got this course," but we should point out that is the other way around, in fact.

The reason you've done a course on Facebook ads is because you know that they work, and that they are really the backbone of your author career, and certainly hundreds, and hundreds of the people in the SPF community, I think, would agree with that.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, they are now. It wasn't always the case. I suppose I've been doing Facebook ads now for a couple of years, and was doing pretty well before I started to advertise, but **once I started getting into it**

properly, that was an accelerant for some fairly rapid growth from 2015 onwards.

It is the platform I'm most familiar with. I still spend most of my advertising budget on Facebook, although I'm spreading things around a bit now, but it is the one that's been most effective, and it still works well.

James Blatch: Let's start with a major question. When a lot of people start moving into this area of marketing, and their own business, and their own books, they get a bit confused when we talk about social media, because everybody is familiar with their normal social media experience, which is not paid ads. It is what we would call organic social media, i.e. you have a page, you have a Twitter account, or Instagram account, whatever, and you can do your best everyday. I see authors, I follow quite a few online.

I see some of them work really hard at regular news, and trying to get shares, and likes, but why, Mark, is that not enough anymore?

Mark Dawson: There's a few reasons. It still works, and it is important to have that in your arsenal, but **it doesn't really work; certainly not as well as it used to, because Facebook really curtailed what we'd call organic reach.**

Say you've got a Facebook page with 100 people on it. Two, or three years ago, if you did a normal update post saying, I don't know, that you've got a new book out for example, it might have got out to 50, or 60 of those people. If you do it today, it will get to one, or two maximum. The reach has been severely culled.

James Blatch: They've done that deliberately, right?

Mark Dawson: **They've done that deliberately, because they know that they've got a great platform with people who will react to those kinds of messages.** It's quite reasonable for Facebook to say, "If you want to do

that, and take advantage of the platform that we've built, you're going to have to pay us for the privilege." That's what they've done.

They've curtailed organic reach, and they've opened up reach if you're prepared to pay for it. That's the equation you need to look at now when it comes to Facebook, and also when it comes, pretty much, to all platforms, certainly the ones that we're going to be talking about today.

James Blatch: The two sides of that; they've made tweaks to the news feed, and very complicated algorithms go into this, and it's the heart of the Facebook business. But partly what they must do, and they want to do is to make sure the news feed is a lively, and entertaining place for you, otherwise you're going to stop using Facebook. Partly, they're doing that, and they're working at who you like connecting with most often.

They're going to start prioritizing, and they've already done this, of course, of prioritizing those people. You'll be friends with some people, and very rarely see any of their news posts, because you haven't interacted with them in a long time. **If you go and seek them out, exchange a few likes here, and there, you'll suddenly find them popping up more commonly on your news feed.**

The flip side of that is that what they have made available in terms of the targeting on the paid advertising side is, well it's frankly phenomenal, isn't it? It's allowing that complexity to sit there on your desktop, and opens up to you to use.

What we're going to talk about now is how to use it.

Mark Dawson: **It's super powerful. There's so much you can do with Facebook ads.** It's raising the platform all the time.

Video is big now. Lead generation is big. Canvas ads are getting quite big. There's loads, and loads of different products that they're always

testing. It's quite a lot to keep on top of, but the benefits of being on top of it are pretty significant. It's certainly worth the effort in terms of time, and also in terms of the money you'll need to spend to play on the platform.

James Blatch: Okay, let's drill down to a little bit of detail now. You mentioned lead gen ads, and I suppose this is a good time to talk about **the two basic campaigns that most authors will run. One is to sell books, but the other is to build a mailing list.**

Is Facebook still good for both of those, the paid ads side?

Mark Dawson: **Absolutely.** It's more competitive these days. You've got to be a bit smarter about how you do things, but I was going to give you quite a lot of numbers. Coincidentally, the reporting platform went down this morning, so I can't get all the information that I wanted.

In terms of building a list, we'll look at lead generation, because that's the new ad product that Facebook rolled out about six months ago, maybe a bit longer than that. It's a facility that enables you to collect someone's email address whilst they remain on Facebook, or Facebook to your platform where that transaction takes place. It's all on Facebook. It's two, or three clicks in total; very convenient, very smooth, and it's good for Facebook, because they don't lose traffic off their platform, and it's good for authors, because you don't lose people along the sign up progression.

The examples we can talk about; there's one for my own books. It's lead generation for my own mailing list. There's one for the Self-Publishing Formula mailing list, because we obviously run ads for that side of the business, too. **Let's look at the books first, because it's probably slightly more relevant for most authors listening.**

I've been running these ads as a video lead gen ads. It's me in a video talking about offering a couple of books to people if they sign up to my

mailing list. Telling them what they can expect, what the books are like, the kind of characters, and series they're compared to; all that kind of stuff.

I'm spending around \$75 dollars a day, and that's bringing in around about 93 subscribers every day. That's what I call cost per acquisition, or cost per subscriber; 80 cents, but the wrinkle I have on that is that I send those people to what I call an up-sell page once they're subscribed. That gives them the chance to buy one of my book sets. I know they're interested in the series so it makes sense for me to offer them a book set to buy as well.

When those sales, round about \$14, \$15 a day are factored into the equation, that brings the cost per acquisition down to 63 cents. That is well within the tolerances of the campaigns that I run, getting people in at that kind of level.

James Blatch: We've mentioned this before, but one of the starting points is that you would know how much an email address is worth to your business?

Mark Dawson: You can run some math, and as you know James, math is my strong point. **You can run some calculations that will work out what you think a subscriber will be worth to you** when you factor in how many launches you'll have each year, the percentage of your list that will react to an email saying you've got a launch, and you multiply that out by two, or three years, and you can get some rough ideas as to what those subscribers are worth to you.

63 cents per subscriber is well underneath what I'm prepared to pay a subscriber based on the experience I have of running launch campaigns to those kinds of lists for the best part of a couple of years.

James Blatch: I want to unpack a couple of things that you mentioned going into that. First of all, you talked about a lead gen video. Not everyone's familiar with it.

As I understand the concept; you used to have an ad, and you created a landing page separately for that: a nice, clean landing page so that people clicked on your advert, which said, "Grab a couple of free books from me," they went to your landing page, which had not much else on it apart from, "Tell me where to send the books," and you got their email address. Lead gen cuts out the landing page bit, right? You click on the lead gen, and Facebook automatically grabs their email address, and gives that to you without them having to go through the landing page step. Is that correct?

Mark Dawson: Pretty much. If you **imagine browsing on your phone, or your computer, or your tablet on Facebook, and you'll see in the feed a video will start playing automatically.** If you tap it, you'll hear the sound as well.

If you then tap the signup button, or you engage with the ad when the video stops playing, it will open up a pop up on Facebook that will say, "If you want to signup, and get these books, we'll pass your email address on to this advertiser. If you're okay with that, click yes."

Most people do, and that just means that the email address is available to me. I automate the collection of that email address with a piece of software called Zapier. There are other ways of doing that, and then that email address, and all the other ones that sign up are automatically put into a separate list in my Mailchimp account. Then everything is automated from that step. Once the ad runs, I don't need to do anything. It's all taken care of.

James Blatch: Have you switched over completely to lead gen, or are you still using the landing page?

Mark Dawson: **Not completely, because I also run another campaign on Facebook,** and the objective for that is to get as many video views as possible, because **Facebook loves video right now.**

You can get views of your video at one, or two cents per view; usually about one cent per view. I spend maybe \$15, or \$20 a day on those videos, because there is two purposes being achieved there. **Number one, it's increasing people's awareness of my books** within the communities that I'm targeting; fans of certain writers will see that video quite a bit. Also, by clicking on the ads, I'll send people over to the landing page. It means I probably get another twenty subscribers a day just coming in from that campaign, too.

James Blatch: Okay, the other thing that you mentioned was the up sell-thing. Just again, to flesh that out a little bit. This is the would you like fries with that option.

This is basically at the same time as grabbing their email address, they get an email, presumably, it's the first email they get, is it?

Mark Dawson: **No, it's not an email.** Once they sign up, **if they go through the lead gen route, Facebook gives you a chance to give them a link to click on to the end of the process.** I'll send them to that page where they can buy the books.

If they're going the other way, Mailchimp typically, and all good email service providers do this, too, you can, instead of the default, "Thank you for joining my list" page that they're served, you can send them to one of your own webpages. I send them to one on my site that just is quite carefully designed to make it obvious that they can get a bargain by buying either, or both of the book sets that I've got available.

James Blatch: Okay. Let me pick up again with Facebook before we move on to any other platforms. This is mailing list building at the moment. In terms of sales, how does that work? Obviously, you don't use lead gen ads for sales. You're directing people presumably to your Amazon page?

Mark Dawson: Let's just go back before we go on to sales. **There's one more thing especially for people who are doing non-fiction.** We

obviously run lead gen ads for Self-Publishing Formula when we've got courses to sell.

One of things we're working on at the moment is a much more entry level course, which we're calling, Self-Publishing Formula 101. We're advertising quite extensively right now, because we're looking for beta testers for the course. People will be getting the course for free in return for providing feedback. We're advertising for that, and we're using lead gen to do that. Number one, it's getting us potential beta testers, and it's also building a list for us; for when we're ready to launch this course.

We've been running what I call a static image lead gen. It's not a video. It's a fairly bright yellow graphic that we designed that says, "Authors wanted," and there's a little bit of text that just says what the deal is. We've been running those for about a week, I think, perhaps ten days, and we've added about maybe 2,500 new subscribers to our list have come in through that ad.

The cost of adding them has been well under a dollar a time. Some days, it's been 20 cents per lead, which is ridiculously cheap. That compares with when we're doing the ads for the last Facebook ads course. I think our cost per acquisition was around about 2.50, and 3.50, something like that; very much cheaper at the moment than it was then. That's been great.

On that last campaign, I know people are interested in numbers. For the last campaign we ran for the Facebook ads course, over the course of that ads campaign, and this is going to be a big number so I don't want people to fall of their chairs, because you don't need to spend this much when you're starting, because we didn't when we started the course. We spent \$30,874, but that generated just over \$91,000. That's a return on investment of 196%. For those people who say that Facebook ads don't work, they really do work, and that's been a pretty good example of that for us.

James Blatch: Okay. That's the two sides, and people obviously know that the Facebook course sells for hundreds of dollars, and books sell for a few dollars, so you are looking at a scaled down version of that, and people don't need to, as you say, faint when they hear how much we spent on ads. We'll talk on the other platforms as well, because we used YouTube advertising, and Twitter ads the time before. When we come on to them, we'll also talk about SPF as well, because that's usually our starting point, because that's our business that all three of us run, and to get it going, and working there is the starting point, and then we move onto books, and authors.

That is mailing list growth. We talked about the fact that each email address is worth something to you over time, and you've got the up-sell option as well to try to minimize the cost of getting them on board, and a very important part. The list system, this is not specific to authors. As you've heard, we use it in SPF for our courses, but pretty much all digital businesses in some way, or form have a list at their heart, which is the way the business operates.

List is building is essential. We would always recommend, wouldn't we, to authors that they do focus on list building, particularly in the early days. They don't dive straight in, trying to sell books through advertising, or at least they do the two in parallel. They don't just do one.

Mark Dawson: **The list is most important for new authors just starting out. You have to get a mailing list.** It's absolutely critical. It's the most valuable asset you'll have as a creative professional.

It isn't just digital businesses that need mailing lists, I'd say even bricks, and mortar stores, you need mailing lists these days. It's a great way to reach your customers. It doesn't matter what you're selling. It's important to reach out to them, and tell them when you've got something that you think they might be interested in. It's especially pertinent when it comes to what we're doing.

James Blatch: So that's mailing list building, and we always talk about mailing list building as being the single most important thing that authors do when they start out. You don't simply start an advertising campaign for sales, because as we've mentioned before, whatever your business is online, it tends to revolve around a list. That's how digital businesses work, and authors are no different from that. Having your list is a really critical part of having a successful, self-published author career. We definitely talk about mailing list building as being the first step, but then ultimately that is all about selling books.

Let's now talk about advertising using the Facebook platform for book sales. Is that working for you at the moment, Mark?

Mark Dawson: **Absolutely.** Something that I do every day too, **I would have told you exactly how much I'm spending right, but as I said the platform isn't reporting right now.** It's probably a couple of hundred dollars a day at the moment I'm spending on ads to sell books.

I suppose it's fair to say it's fluctuating a bit at the moment. Occasionally, it will return a negative investment so that means I'm not making an immediate return on the ad spend, although there is of course a benefit; just advertising in, and of itself is a benefit to you down the road. Generally speaking, most days it's a positive return; between 20%-30% return.

The thing to say about this, for me specifically, and I'm able to compare my experiences with students in the Facebook course, is that I've spent probably a quarter of a million dollars on Facebook ads over the course of the last couple of years. **It's getting more difficult for me now to find fresh audiences that haven't already seen my ads** more than three, or four times.

I happen to be quite creative. I'm doing lots of retargeting at the moment. That means if you visited my websites, or you've seen some of the videos I

run on Facebook, I'll then serve you with Facebook ads to try to sell you a copy of the book, or a box set, or something along those lines.

Other students in the group are getting returns of over 100% in some cases. It's still a very successful platform for sales. It's just, for me, I need to be a bit more nimble than I had to be 18 months ago. That's just, I think, because I'm chewing through the audience even a big platform like Facebook can provide.

James Blatch: Right, that's one of the questions people ask is how big is the audience?

Are we going to run out of audience at some point? You advertise on quite a big scale though?

Mark Dawson: **I do. I'm running lots, and lots of variations of ads.** The spend occasionally, when I was spending the most, maybe a year ago, probably up to \$1500 a day in terms of ads. I've scaled that down now. I'm concentrating a bit more on building my list up more. I've probably got 60,000 on my mailing list now. It's very valuable for me right now, but that's going to be even more valuable down the road as I start new series, or just continue to build my back catalog.

James Blatch: We'll take a little pause on the income report whilst we launch the course, but I know you're going to do another one soon; probably for this month?

Mark Dawson: **That's the plan.** I'd definitely like to get back to that again.

James Blatch: Yeah, good.

In terms of overall, before we move on to other platforms, and other ways of spending your dollar advertising:

Would you say from where we are at the moment that if you only chose one platform of everything you've got available, and I would include old media here as well - newspapers, or whatever are always an option for you - you would still choose Facebook?

Mark Dawson: **Definitely. It's the most mature of the markets.**

Google AdWords is more mature than Facebook but Google AdWords is very expensive, and not in my experience effective for this kind of thing. **Facebook should be the first port of call for anyone looking to build lists, or sell books directly.**

James Blatch: Okay, good. It's good to know that Facebook's still working, and it's still providing a career for you, and definitely something we want to advocate for other people. **If you've got one thing you want to crack over the next twelve months, or so with your career, it's probably Facebook ads.**

Let's move onto one, or two of the other platforms. **Twitter took a similar journey to Facebook in that it established itself, in this rather unique way.** It's USP, I suppose to use the word unique twice, is that it restrains you 140 characters, and some people poo-pooed it when it came on. Britain's Prime Minister famously called people twats for using Twitter in a radio interview.

Actually, as a social media platform, I quite like Twitter. It's my favorite one just to browse. I can lose myself, waste time on that for quite a long time. Then, they introduced ads. The ads, at first, felt a little bit intrusive when they first started popping up on your line like they often do, but actually mixed in with the photographs, which are part of the news feed now in Twitter, or Twitter stream, I should say. I think the adverts are fitting in very nicely, and actually you can see some companies have really cracked it, and understand how it works. Others haven't so much.

We looked into it for authors, and we created a mini course that goes along with the main course that Mark uses. We've got quite a lot of experience with Twitter ads now.

I think I would say from the top, before we get into some of the specifics, that **Twitter ads don't work as effectively, and as well as Facebook ads, but you can get them working for you**, and you can certainly get them building your mailing list. One of the things I would say about Twitter ads; we've noticed this with both the SPF campaigns, and the author campaigns, is that **the quality of leads is not as good as the quality of leads you get through Facebook.**

I can't exactly explain to you why. I suspect it's because Twitter's a slightly more dynamic experience. Things flash past you very quickly. It's a very easy click on something to go through, and explore a little bit more. For instance, a lead card, which I'll come into in a moment.

With Facebook, you make more of an option to go to the advert. You're drawn into the advert, because it's specifically attracting you. You've made more of an effort to click on that, watch the video, or so on. Maybe there's a quality difference there. I'm not sure I can fully explain it except I think that is the difference.

We've had some feedback on that front as well, although people have been building their main list, they haven't found as useful, the leads as valuable to them as the ones they're getting through Facebook. But that's not to say that you can't build leads. **We built 500-600 email addresses through Twitter advertising for the Self-Publishing Formula campaign for launch two back in October, November last year.**

They offer a similar type of advert for you. In fact, they pioneered the lead card. I'm pretty certain the lead card was on Twitter before Facebook took it up. That works in a similar way. You design your advert. You design a little image around it. They're quite strict on the characters are very similar to

Facebook on that front. **The lead card is long, and thin, and once clicked on, you get another confirmation click to go through, and then that's it.** Twitter has captured your email address, and you can either have that automated through to your Mailchimp campaign. We don't even need a third party to do that. With Twitter, it seems to work pretty well, or you can export them, or you can do both, actually. You can export them directly from Twitter in CSV format, and do what you want with them.

The targeting, again, pretty similar to Facebook I would say. You've got all the usual demographics, and then, quite a good range of interests. Certainly, now that I'm moving into the AdWords campaign, which we'll talk about in a minute, I think the interest, and the key words campaigns in Twitter actually are better in terms of selection, and **I was able to really focus our Twitter ads down to a very specific audience where we were getting a good return on our rates.**

I'm trying to remember now, the SPF campaigns, **I think we were buying leads at about three pounds fifty to four pounds fifty, which is highish for SPF.** And when we ran it for your author campaigns, I got variable. Definitely, some days were better than others, but I was buying leads for your books campaigns as low as 25 cents, and more typically around the 30-35 cents mark, and then occasionally a little bit more. Overall, probably about 30-35 cents, and that's a good price to buy leads as long as they do turn out to be in the long run, healthy leads for you.

Mark Dawson: That is a pretty competitive price. You can hit that with Facebook, too, of course, but I'd be very happy with that going forward.

James Blatch: **The other thing to say about Twitter is, I think as an advertising platform, it's slightly, as Mark said, less mature than Facebook.** It is evolving, and they're coming up with new ways of doing things.

Video ads were in their infancy; still really are in their infancy with Twitter. It's definitely one to watch, and if you get a chance, it's quite an intuitive platform. It doesn't take too much to get your head around it. It's definitely one, I think, to be familiar with at this stage, and start playing with, and running limited campaigns, because there will be a time in the near future when enough people are on Twitter that stretch across a wide demographic than perhaps they are at the moment. It is a bit of a younger audience, then you will start to perhaps see better returns.

Thinking about it, I'm thinking out loud here, that might be the main difference between the quality of returns is, you do have a slightly younger set on Twitter. It gets even younger when you go down to Instagram, and Snapchat, but Facebook, for one reason, or another; I'm in my forties, clinking away-

Mark Dawson: No way.

James Blatch: Yeah, a surprise, I know, but almost everyone I know is on Facebook, and it covers a very wide demographic, including the silver surface; including the old audience. If you're writing books, they're a good market for you.

In fact, I think your demographic, actually Mark, is 45+?

Mark Dawson: 40+, yeah. Obviously, I've got readers all over the place, but **the biggest slice of the pie is 40, and up.**

James Blatch: That might be the difference with Twitter. It might be the fact that it's still rolling out. It's still being adopted by all; the current users are getting older, of course, but as you get an older demographic, that might be the difference between profit, and loss for us on Twitter.

That is to say, it's a nice platform, it's intuitive to use, it's pretty simple to set up, and we did get some pretty decent returns at the price we were looking

for. **The question mark over it is how good a quality are those returns?** You may be in a different genre from us where that works better if you're looking at a younger audience. It might be Twitter gives you better results indeed than Facebook. YA has always struggled a little bit more on Facebook, because of the demographic. I would definitely view Twitter as one you should be involved with.

Shall we move on to YouTube, which is kind of the new kid on the block for us?

Mark Dawson: Yes.

James Blatch: Even though it's been around for a while, and YouTube ads are nothing new. YouTube is a very exciting area, because **the people who know a lot about digital advertising, and who work in this space, they are all raving about YouTube at the moment.** They're talking about it being the wildest part of the wild west, in that not that many people are actually using it.

I think I saw a stat that 7% of US businesses have a proper presence on YouTube; i.e. that they update their presence on YouTube. They didn't simply create an account at some point. That's a very low figure, which means that **there is definitely scope for getting in there, getting it right, and making hay while the sun shines.**

We got involved with SPF, which we do first, of course, to examine the platform to make sure it works for our business. **After an initial shaky start, as always with these things, spent a few dollars trying to get it going, it really started working.**

I had a funny transition between hating the AdWords platform, because it is very complicated, and now loving it, because I realize that complexity is actually its golden goose. It's what you can use to find your profit, once you start presenting. You choose how you present the data to you in AdWords;

you've got it skewed around in conversions, for instance, for this building. It all makes sense.

Where are we now? I'm just having a look, because we were running low level campaigns at the moment in between launches. **If I look over the last fourteen days on the AdWords platform, I can say we've bought 134 leads of our YouTube at 2.55 pounds each.** On the graph in front of me, I can see that on one of those days, I bought 17 leads at 1.21 pounds, which is pretty good.

Last Monday was very good, and then on another day, we got three at 6.54 pounds. That was Sunday. There is some variation there, but if I go back, the average over fourteen days, 2.55 pounds for 134 leads, that is an active, profitable, working campaign for us.

The difference perhaps between Twitter ads, and YouTube ads is these leads are of value to us.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, they are. I do have some numbers on that. **The last ads course launch, which was in June this year, we spent \$4,165, and that generated \$5,993. That's a return on investment of 44%.** Not quite as punchy as Facebook was, but still very effective, and well worth doing.

There are some clever things with YouTube ads. If you do them properly, you can really get your costs down. And as you say, James, we're starting to look at taking videos that we've shot for Facebook ads, turning those around a bit, and starting to use those on YouTube. We're starting to get some decent results coming in for books as well. That's something that we're definitely interested in developing as we go forwards.

James Blatch: Yeah, we're in the midst of that, and I'm recording screen flows for a course that we're going to be rolling out.

It's a bit early to give you a lot of data on the books yet, but we're in the midst of that now, and starting to see the results that we want to see. **The great hack that's available for YouTube ads, which some people know about, is that you can actually get a free view.**

The way YouTube video advertising works is that you get charged per view. I could see, for instance, those 134 leads I talked about over the last fortnight, the advert was served 22,800 times. I got 5,032 views from that. That's a pretty good conversion rate, actually, at 22%. I was charged seven pence per view. However, what counts as a view is somebody watching at least half your video, or 30 seconds, whichever comes first. If your video is 60 seconds, or more, people have to watch 30 seconds of it before you actually get charged.

If you cleverly design your video, and that's how we teach people to do it, and you basically put all the information they need in the first twenty, twenty-five seconds with a nice big clickable banner, you will get a percentage of people who will click through. They're called click through views, and click through conversions that will give you a free conversion. You won't have paid anything for that, and that obviously lowers the cost of your overall conversions. That's a decent hack there for YouTube videos.

It's not a loophole. YouTube are quite happy with this, and they actually call them click through conversion rates, and they show you your rates, and how many click through conversions you've had. You can have that in your data displayed on your dashboard as well.

The different types of video, and this is a bit of an unknown, and I think it's one of the major hurdles that sits in front of authors when they think about YouTube advertising, and in fact, the video advertising on Facebook, is that most people could probably bring themselves to design a picture ad; a banner with the click here stuff on it; or, they could design it, and speak to somebody who can design it, and create it for them. But when it comes to

video, people do have a bit of block in their minds about where they start with video.

The good news, and I come from a professional video background where we talk a lot about using graphics, and music, and very whizzy.

But **YouTube has shown is actually, somebody talking to screen is one of the best ways you can connect with your audience**; is most likely to get people drawn in to listen to you.

You can record that on an iPhone. You can record that with a cheap microphone; a 34 pound microphone, a \$40 microphone you could plug into your iPhone, which will give you the extra bit of sound quality, which is very necessary. Apart from that, you could walk around in a park recording your piece to camera. You could do it in your garden. You can do it in your kitchen with a little bit of normal, natural lighting, and you've got a video there.

You've done a few of these now, Mark, haven't you? By your own admission, it's not necessarily your comfort zone; recording videos, but you've got involved, you've got stuck in, and produced quite a few.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, **it's one of those things where you get more comfortable the more you do it.** I've done lots now, and you can get clever little auto cues that you can run from your iPad; that works very well. That gives me a bit of comfort to know that I don't need to memorize scripts, and I can riff off things a little bit, knowing that I can go back to the script if I need to.

It's one of those things; authors tend to be reasonably introspective people, and I think the idea of putting yourself in a video is something that can bother some people. It doesn't bother me anymore, it's just something that I need to get better at. It's just practice makes perfect. The more you do it, the better you get.

James Blatch: YouTube does have that slight hurdle of video advertising, but I have noticed there's been some creative ways of getting around this. One of our students used a company in the far east to produce her video. She designed it, told them what she wanted, and then there was a bit of backwards, and forwards of revising to getting it quite right, and she paid something ludicrous like \$40 for that video, which is a very low rate for a video.

If these companies, and these people are popping up, there's a service called, Peopleperhour.com in the UK, which we use. We find editors, and people will do small jobs quite cheaply for you. That does suddenly open up this area of content creation, which might be a bit of a block to you, and definitely YouTube advertising.

AdWords is not intuitive, I'll tell you right from the beginning. It's fiddly, and most of my screen flows I'm producing for this course is just getting things set up in the first place, which was a little bit painful, but once you're through that, and looking at the results, and the data, you get into it, and you can certainly use it to your advantage.

In fact, those figures you gave Mark, I'll dispute that; not dispute it, you're absolutely right in terms of that \$5,000 that we spent, but you've got to remember that I wasted several thousand dollars getting it working. Really, I would say I've spent 1,839 pounds on the campaign that produced 722 email addresses. That's about \$2,500. What did you say we made on that?

Mark Dawson: That's true. We generated 5,993.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: You could probably double the return.

James Blatch: Yeah, I think once you've got through, hopefully you do a course like ours, or somebody else's, and you can follow, and not make the mistakes that we made at the beginning of trying to get things working. It's something I'll mention here, and I know you perhaps have a different thought on this, but **I could not get the United States market working for us.** I'm looking at the figures here, and some of those conversions, 28 conversions, and 18 pounds on one of the US keywords campaigns, the same keywords campaign in the UK was the 722 at 2.55 pounds. I couldn't get them working in the US.

I actually think that it was because although Britain is a good brand value in the US, I think Britain is quite a good brand value despite any politics that may have happened in recent weeks in the UK. I think it works very well. People like that, and they trust it, but I think it didn't quite have that connection with a very British environment.

When it's video, you're listening to somebody talk, and speak, and it doesn't feel like it's necessarily for you, when you're in America, and it's a British person in Britain talking. We have a plan to get some American voices in. I'm going to try that in the future, but at the moment we are running YouTube campaigns successfully in the UK, and have not got them working on the US-Canada border. You might find if you're American, it's the other way around.

Mark Dawson: A tip for British authors, don't speak with crumpet, and tea in your mouth. It doesn't go down well.

James Blatch: I don't think you should have done that. Also, you probably should have had some clothes on. It may have been the other reason.

Good, okay, we're going to mention one, or two of the others; the up, and coming new kids on the block, and the younger demographic. **One of the things we hear a lot about in the chat online in the various forums of people trying to get their book sales going in the digital spaces that**

people who write for the YA market, and children's books have not found it as easy using the methods that other people are using if you're writing thrillers, and erotica, or romance; those other big genres. They do need to be done slightly differently.

This is where Instagram, Snapchat, for instance, may well come in. However, the early reports we're hearing from people who've been using this is that Instagram in particular is good for visibility, good for raising awareness of you as an author, and that could have a good positive effect.

Let's face it, lots of advertising is simply about raising awareness of your product, not necessarily directly selling it, and that's an important part of you being visible, and being seen; but, not necessarily good for actually getting email addresses, or actually making direct sales as a result of the advert.

It's definitely something we're curious about, isn't it, Mark?

Mark Dawson: I'm not going to be categorical on this at all, because I don't have any data on it. **It will be one of the platforms that I look at next. I'm sure it can be made to work.** It's just a question of testing, finding the ads that work, working it where the audiences are, working on the copy; all that kind of stuff. I'm absolutely sure that it can work.

I think places like Snapchat, that's probably the one I'm most interested in right now, which is certainly aimed at a younger demographic. It should be good for YA, things like that. Things like Facebook ads; they do work for YA, too.

It's a bit more challenging, because you might be advertising not to the reader, but to the person who buys the reader their books, potentially. Facebook is a slightly older platform, but even with all of that being said, **we've had authors like Eva Polar who has done extremely well**

with her YA series, which wasn't doing great until she started to advertise. Now, she left her job after getting those ads to work.

It's a bit more difficult, yes, but impossible, definitely not. The more we look into other platforms, the more we'll find different ways to reach different kinds of readers.

James Blatch: We should also say that later this week, **we're going to be interviewing a man who used Facebook advertising specifically for children's book with great success.** And this is somebody who has gone on to recommend, and run Facebook advertising campaigns for quite a few noticeable start ups. So we're going to hear how he did that specifically for children's books, but also a lot of valuable lessons, I think, for whatever genre you're in. I'm not sure when we're going to broadcast that, yet, but we're going to be recording that this week.

I was just going to mention before we leave the area of YouTube. More specifically, that **the whole concept of lead gen - I do think this is something YouTube could do with introducing.**

Because you do have to use the landing page method with YouTube, and when you're already having to really optimize, and work hard to optimize to get the returns you want, you could do without those intermediate steps that may lose somebody at that point.

I don't know what AdWords plans are for YouTube advertising in the future, but I would definitely like to see some sort of instant click on your video that maybe one confirmation click then provides your email address into your list.

They do have a very, very good, and thorough re-marketing set up, and it's very important to get that set up right at the beginning of your YouTube ads life. That does allow you to specifically target anybody who has visited your website, any of the pages, or specifically target anybody who has visited your YouTube channel, as well as, of course, people who've

engaged in your campaigns in the past. That re-marketing, certainly, you've got an already a quite optimized audience there, and you will get a higher hit rate from that.

But we still don't have the lead gen click, which I think maybe is a little bit lacking on YouTube at the moment.

Mark Dawson: Exactly, but it will come. **They'll be keeping an eye on what's working on the other platforms, and they'll need to innovate in order to keep up with people on Facebook, and Twitter. It's just a question of when it happens.**

James Blatch: Okay, well I guess we just need to summarize. We've been talking for 3/4 of an hour now, which is a long time for you and me to rabbit on, but this is really the bread, and butter of people's existence if you're an author running your business.

Classically, we talk about the afternoon, don't we? Write in the morning, and then run your business in the afternoon, or however you want to have it set up. It can be a little bit daunting, it can be dispiriting on occasions when you've put dollars in that you're not going to get back, and you've got no results for them.

But when you do get that working; when you have listened, watched results from other people, taken stuff on board, optimized your audience, you start to see returns. That can be one of the happiest moments of your professional career.

Mark Dawson: It's amazing, and just in terms of lead gen, I remember getting my first non-family member signing up to my mailing list, and that was through an organic sign up. Even so, the sentiment is the same, and it was a pretty amazing feeling.

I suppose it's a measure of progress now that I get emails from Mailchimp saying, "You've got 150 signups today," and it's kind of like, and next. I should probably get out of that habit, because it is useful to remember that all of those 150, you have maybe 10, or 20 of those will become die hard fans, and you don't need that many die hard fans to sustain yourself as creative professional. Being flippant about it is not the best thing in the world; **remembering that each of those people can have a really important part to play in my career down the line.**

James Blatch: Okay, we're looking round for a good guest to have on YouTube adverts, which we will do at some point, because we're going to re-visit that as the one that we're looking into at the moment, when we've got more data to share with you.

The other thing to remember, I think, I'll just leave you with this is, that **you should remember that the platforms are changing**, the demographics, the people who you've mentioned earlier, the people on these social media platforms is changing all the time. They're getting new signups every day by the tens of thousands in your area, and by the millions globally; not every day millions, but across the weeks. And that means that **what used to not work for you may be working for you in the next few weeks.**

Always keep in touch with them, and always keep yourself as familiar as possible with the platforms to take advantage when they start working for your genre.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, exactly. Before we wrap up, one thing, I mentioned this earlier, we are in the process of doing a new course, much more basic than the Facebook ads course, and there is a waiting list right now. I'm going to select some beta testers to get the course for free once it's been recorded. I don't remember off the top of my head what the landing page is for that, but if you go to the Self-Publishing Formula.com, and then click through to courses, at the top, you can click a nice yellow banner that will give you the chance to sign up to the mailing list, and get updates on

the course. [SelfPublishing Formula.com](https://SelfPublishingFormula.com), and then just look at the courses tab across the top.

James Blatch: Do you want to quickly tell us what's going to be in the course, Mark, a little sneak preview?

Mark Dawson: Everything, really. **The starting point will be, you've just finished your manuscript.** Let's say it's Word, or Scrivener, and it will be what you need to do from that? It will include modules on pre-publication; things like building websites, mailing list, low level advertising, that kind of stuff. Then, it will be tactics when you've got one book to sell, tactics when you've got two books to sell, because everything changes; and, then when you've got three, or more books.

It's going to be big. It's likely to be the course that I was going to do before we did the Facebook ads course, because I've got a bit more experience now in doing courses. People are very keen to get this, and I'm actually quite keen to record it. It's been unfinished business for the last 18 months, or so. I'm looking forward to getting into that.

James Blatch: Setting yourself up for commercial success as a writer.

Mark Dawson: Yep, that's it.

James Blatch: Brilliant. Thank you very much indeed, Mark, you can go back into the garden. You can use your hot tub about eleven o'clock tonight when things have finally cooled down.

Mark Dawson: I had a go last about ten o'clock last night, and I almost melted. I'm going to have a beer, and have a drink in the garden.

James Blatch: Excellent, see you later.

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