

PODCAST 4: MASTERCLASS FIVE MUST-DO ACTIONS FOR NEW AUTHORS

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James: We're having a ball aren't we out in this podcast?

Mark: Yeah it's been great. Some of the people that we've spoken to have been really inspirational, and I hope that listeners have first of all enjoyed the first three episodes and the income report, and they're going to stick around for some really great content coming down the track.

James: The whole podcast world is brilliant for people. It's such an empowering thing for entrepreneurs, for people in specialized industries like ours. A few years ago this would have been quite expensive consultancy. You'd have gone to a big guy who's busy and picked their brains about what they were doing and gleaned what you could from them and these sessions, perhaps go into a seminar and travel to do that, and now it's all in our back pocket on our phones, and we're really delighted to be able to embrace this technology, and impart a lot of information, and that's what we're doing today.

Mark: Exactly, and what we hopefully will be able to do today is just mirror the giving spirit that has always been a part of the self-publishing community. Ever since I started writing, 4 or 5 years ago, I started to learn how to do things. From podcasts, from bulletin boards or forums, and other writers, it's always been a case of helping hands extended. No one pulls a ladder up after them, and that's not something that we're going to do. We're going to be providing as much useful and actionable information

as we can through interviews and through the kinds of master class to have episode that we're going to look at today.

James: Yeah, so we've called today's episode The 5 Must-Do Actions for New Authors. These are going to be 5 very actionable important steps that you're going to take. This is beyond obviously writing a book although we're going to talk a little bit about the book, and what sort of product you should have on the shelf. This is going to be more to do with your practical set up, your approach to marketing and your mindset as you move forward from being a writer to a marketer.

Mark: Yeah, and as well the target here would be typically for people who are at the start of their career, but it's always helpful I think and I do this all the time, just looking back at the systems that I've got up and running and the kind of practices that I am engaged in just to make sure that everything is optimal. There may be some tips in here that established authors can implement that will make things more efficient, make their processes more professional and in the long run sell more books.

James: What is the number one tip?

Mark: Number 1, the obvious thing which we're not going to touch on, we'll talk about craft and the book itself further down the line. We'll just assume that listeners have a book that's ready and ready to be sold.

The first thing that people need to do is set up their mailing list. I get asked this an awful lot, what's the first thing that I should do as a new author? It is that, set up a mailing list. I can illustrate that with reference to an example from real life.

When I started publishing successfully I had a book out. My first self-published book called The Black Mile.

I did a promotion with Amazon on KDP. It was one of the free promotional periods that you could and you still can use with KDP when you're exclusive to Amazon. I had a five day period I think, and I put the book up, boosted it

with an ad from ... I think it was from Freebooksy, and I remember really vividly, it was in August I think. I went for a bike ride and I just took out my phone well I was having a rest to see how many copies had been downloaded, and it was something ridiculous like 40 or 50,000 had been downloaded in a few days.

I had an initial blast of euphoria which probably lasted about 30 minutes, and then I was kind of, all right, that's great. Good. I haven't got any other books for people to buy and more importantly, I've got no way for me to getting contact with the people who have enjoyed the book and wanted to hear more news from me. I didn't have a mailing list; I had no call to action on the front and back of the books. I probably lost about six months worth of head start by just going into that unprepared, which was frankly unforgivable. It won't be a mistake that I'll make again.

James: Let's touch on a couple of those subjects there. First of all let's talk about this and there's no way of sugarcoating this. We've heard it from several different sources and this has been your experience as well. In an ideal world you do not go to the market with one book. You can do it, and you can start your main list building, but in an ideal world when you're writing your first book, you think about either breaking it down to a short novella, then followed by another novella, or you think about the first 2 or 3.

We've heard this repeatedly from quite big authors who've been successful in this field, and obviously you felt it back then when you had all these names in one book and nowhere to go at that stage.

Mark: It's optimal to have more books. I don't think it's essential. I think it is reasonable to put one book up provided that everything else is switched on. You've got a mailing list. You may not have a lead magnet at that stage, so that's an incentive for someone to join the list, but if I had a book finished, I personally wouldn't wait to buy the other one, or another couple, although some people will do it that way. I think it's reasonable to put the

book out, but just make sure that everything is aligned and you're ready to exploit traffic that's generated and people buying that book, enjoying it and wanting to know more about you and your other books.

James: I've taken this from some of the people we've spoken to and from seeing how the system works, and I think I'm veering towards trying to break my initial novel into at least two. I'm quite inspired actually reading more than a few John Milton novels. I think it's a permafrost at the beginning of your book set. It's the North Korea one. It's short, it's pithy, it gets you into the guy. In fact I call out the fact that you don't give too much away, nobody even knows who this guy is apart from what he's doing. That for me was a really good hook to get into your series, and not too much writing on your part really.

Mark: It's about 20,000 words and that wasn't the first book that I wrote. The Cleaner was the first book and then I think I'd written Saint Death and The Driver, so the first 3 novels were written and available, and it was only when I decided that I wanted to give something away as an incentive for people to join my mailing list. This is when I started to get real serious about building my list. Then I went back and as you've read that book, I was on holiday in Spain, so over the course of a week. My daughter at the time was kind of having a two hour nap at lunch time, so I wrote that in about 10 hours over the course of that week, at least most of it.

I got it edited, got it professionally prepared, and then I got it up online and I started to use that as my reader magnet. I didn't do it at first. Certainly you can do after the fact. If you're able to drop 3 at once, then wonderful, you're going to go pretty well provided everything else is correct, but it's not essential, you can do the other way round.

James: Okay, let's get onto the nitty-gritties of the mailing list. MailChimp, Aweber, there are various email handling programs around, but we would definitely recommend using one of them.

Mark: Out of those two, and there's about 5 or 6 I could recommend. From really complicated, feature-rich applications like Infusionsoft, Entrepot, Active Campaign, things like that. Slightly beyond what new authors would need.

I think it's completely fine to use MailChimp or Aweber. Mailchimp is free up to 2,000 subscribers. Once you hit 2,001 you're going to have to start paying, but I would recommend paying for it slightly earlier, because you want to use some paid features and in particular you want to use automation, which is probably something we'll cover in a bit more depth later on, autoresponder sequences and funnels and things like that.

James: There's a way, isn't there of having an auto response. You use the welcome email, and that's a cheeky way of getting a little bit of automation in for free on your list. That's good for your initial book giveaway, but it's not good for nurturing the campaign, nurturing your readers afterwards.

Mark: That's right. You can use that. That is a good hack, but MailChimp is not a particularly expensive piece of software. I think it's like 10 or 15 bucks a month at the lowest level, something like that. It's pretty reasonable. You can use it for free until you get established, but I wouldn't wait too long to jump to the paid version because it's more powerful. You get more bang for your buck. The same goes for Aweber. It's exactly the same kind of principle with the same kind of considerations you'll need to think about.

James: I use MailChimp. I've liked it a lot actually. It's not massively intuitive the very first few sessions you have with it, but don't be disappointed. There's some really good training. They do lots of good video training tutorials themselves on MailChimp. We've got a little bit of training on that coming up as well, but there are ways of finding out what you are doing. Quite quickly it will become second nature to you. AWeber I'm not so familiar with, but I understand from the people that use it that is not too dissimilar and again you can get into it. All of these things it's part and parcel of that journey of that switching either whether it's

morning to afternoon that Jo Penn and Mark and other people we've spoken do or your own routine.

You do need to be a writer at one point and then move into your marketing and this is part and parcel of that.

You mentioned sign up. At the front and back of the book, just to explain to us. This is something I haven't done, I don't know how you do it. How would you do that?

Mark: Okay, so when the book is finished and you've got your MOBI file or well EPUB or maybe whatever format you are exporting into and probably both. You want to have a sign up at the front and the back of the book. Most people will tell you just put a sign up at the back.

What a sign up is it will be a quick message to the reader, and will say something along the lines of I hope you enjoyed the book. If you would like to get X free items, it can be a novel or novella or something else, and we'll get into magnets and reader magnets a little bit later on probably on a different podcast I guess. You need to advertise that, and give them a URL to go to, to sign up for the item that they are interested in.

Definitely put it at the back of the book. I would also recommend putting something at the front, so it doesn't need to be the full message. What I do is I have a quick line that says something like if you'd like a free whatever, a free novella, just go to the sign up at the back of the book. The reason I don't have the actual URL there is because people can see that link when they just look inside on the Amazon product page, and you might start to lose sales by people just seeing that link and signing up. Think about that. On the other if you can't do the other way around and I'll say this many times as we go through these episode shows, but since five is always going to be worth more to me than a single sale. Because I can sell books probably to a subscriber which is going to be worth more to me than just one sale, so always focus on getting subscribers, that's going to be the bedrock of your business.

James: I remember you saying in the past that one of your greatest regrets is that you didn't have a mailing list at an earlier stage in your entry career?

Mark: Yeah it was a stupid error; it was one of those situations where I was running perhaps a bit too fast before I could walk, and I possibly even didn't know at that stage that it was important. I certainly lost a few readers by not getting going earlier on. I have made up for that, I'm looking about 40,000 to 45,000 subscribers now. It's something that you can recover from if you haven't done that originally, but best practice is definitely to get that down as a process you run at the start.

James: Let's talk about the readers then and how you employ them. You've talked here about a launch team, and what's an ARC or LLC?

Mark: Advance reader copy, this is definitely a subject we'll go into a much great detail how to launch books, but it's probably half a dozen podcasts in that subject alone. What you can do when we you start to build up your list as subscriber is you can graduate some of them, the really keen ones into positions whereby they can have a really direct effect on your career.

You can send LLCs or advance copies when you've got a book that's ready to launch, it's been proofed, edited. You can send it to your advance team, and I use them for reiterating, so they'll pick up everything that slipped through the editorial process.

Also you can use them to lay down early reviews once the book goes live, and that certainly helps to convert traffic coming to your Amazon page or your Apple page. That's a good social proof to get reviews up early, and the more reviews you can get stands to reason that the greater number of sales you are going to have, all other things being equal. That's something that you can definitely start to influence with a launch team.

Over the last couple years when I started doing this, it was so difficult to get reviews, and it was a bit of chicken and egg. You need the sales to get

reviews, but you couldn't get sales without them. It's what comes first, it was really complicated, I struggled for ages to get that fixed, and building that advance team has been the way that I have done that and it's been amazing. Those two have become have become my friends as well which is a lovely side benefit.

James: The social proof you talk about and the way that your books appear on Amazon to people who are browsing, obviously having those stars and having those reviews is incredibly important, we will use those a lot for almost all sorts of products. It's also behind under the bonnet to the Amazon algorithms are running in terms of how they place your listing in search results and so on, and those reviews are important there as well.

Mark: I have to say I suspect reviews play have affected the play in that, but no one knows how the Amazon algorithm works precisely. I have spoken to people of Amazon, and I suspect what I finally know they don't know either, there is probably one guy in a smoky basement in Seattle who understands exactly how it works. I think it's fair to say that they probably play a small part in the algorithm, but what they definitely do play a role in is if people can search genre pages and use review number of stars, average stars as a filter. You are going to be filtered out if you don't get reviews up for the book.

Also once when you are launching you can get onto hot new lists, and the best reviewed lists, all that kind of additional useful way to state, just another place to put your book cover. It will definitely be a situation where the more times it's visible, obviously the more sales you are going to make.

James: Okay, so that is number one of our 5 essential things to do, have a mailing list. Start to build it, consider the mindsets of giving something away to build it. If you got this idea that this first novel you put so much time and effort into, so the last thing you will do is going to give it away. You do need to move on from that, because actually giving it away, getting those

names and getting those readers is going to set you up for the next few years.

Mark: Yeah it's absolutely essential, so yeah, definitely focus on that.

James: Let's move on number 2 of the 5 actions for new authors, websites.

Mark: Yes, you need a website, it's not absolutely essential, it's not something that you have to have before you just start selling books. You do need eventually a bit of the internet web that you can stake out your ground. It's your own little home on the internet where people will be able to find you if they start searching for your name, and they just send out oodles of a very big source of traffic to my website, for people searching for the Joe Milton pictures plus or me. I find that quite a lot once you've got books obviously you can start to link directly from books to development platforms.

You can start to generate affiliate income, because you'll have affiliate links linking out from your website and you'll get commissions when sales are made which can become quite useful source of additional income.

James: Can you just explain the affiliate process for those ones who are uninitiated in this?

Mark: Affiliate links are really useful. Apart from being a useful source of income, they also enable you to track the effect of your various marketing techniques.

The income side of things first, if you go with Amazon and you use their affiliate system, what happens is you'll get a link which is typical similar to a normal link. We will have a little bit of extra code at the end and what that code does is leave a browser, leave a cookie on the browser of the person who has clicked the link and gone through to Amazon. If that potential customer then goes through and actually makes a purchase on Amazon,

and it doesn't have to be the eBook, you'll get 7% to 8% usually off the cover price of the price of the item.

It's great when it's a 3.99 eBook that's going to be an additional 8%, so you bringing your royalties up to nearer 80% rather than 70% which is a very useful bonus. It really pays off around Christmas time when people start buying \$2000, \$3000 televisions. I found last year I had a real boost of income from the affiliate source, it was significantly more, than I was actually making from book sales right back at the start of the first 18 months of my career.

We'll get into affiliates linking and how to use all that in another podcast, it's quite a big subject. You should only be using those links on your website, and you'll start to earn a little bit of extra money which will grow over time.

James: The top line here is that the website is your presence, it's the foundation for a lot of your traffic that's trying to find you, and without that you are restricted to then finding your sales link on Amazon or someone's. It's definitely something that's going to be a part of your marketing strategy.

Mark: It's a fundamental probably; the alternative is what I call digital share cropping. You don't necessarily want to grow your crop on someone else's land, which is exactly the case if you are relying on Amazon or Google. Things can change and they do change all the time. The one constant thing is the website that you control.

Another really important part of that website and that presence is you are going to have an option to sign up for your mailing list. We're tying back to that first item.

If you look at my website markjdawson.com, the first thing you will see is a sign up opportunity to join my list and you'll see a graphic of the books that

I give away. Very, very simple subscription process all linked in with MailChimp, very easy to set up. I'm adding about 75 readers a day at the moment, just through that link. Even if 70 of them don't actually turn out to be long-term readers, if 5 of them do and their typical value to me is \$20, \$25, it's not difficult to work out how much money that could generate over time.

James: Let's move on to Number 3 of the 5 must-do things for new authors. What is that Mark?

Mark: That would be social media presence. Obviously there are plenty of social media platforms out there. Facebook, probably the biggest one right now, certainly the one that I focus on the most, but Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, you could cut your niche with social media for this purpose. Lots and lots ... I could have even mention Google plus, but we won't spend too much breath on that.

Lots and lots of different opportunities to kind of develop your presence across those broadcast mediums. My advice would be to pick one or maybe pick two. Facebook for me would be the first one. That might be because I know it best, and I'm known now as being kind of an authority on advertising on Facebook. Even if you're not ready to advertise, you should definitely have a Facebook profile, I think, and a Facebook page.

Just a quick explanation of what that is. A Facebook profile is the first thing you'll set up. You go into Facebook the first time, you set up a profile, it's where your friends and your family will link to you. It's where you'll browse through funny pictures of cats, all that kind of stuff. It's kind of the social part of things, but the business part is the actual Facebook page. You should definitely set both up. Set the profile up, it takes 5 minutes, setting a page up takes about 30 seconds. You just go in, set up a page ... You would call it whatever you want. I think mine is called Mark Dawson Author because that was the best that I could get. I couldn't get Mark Dawson, but it's very simple. It takes no time at all to do that, but because you have that,

you'll then have people being able to sign up, to become fans of your page. You'll need a page. If you start to advertise you can't advertise through your profile. It has to be through the page.

It's kind of low hanging fruit. You're going to be getting people coming, finding you on Facebook, finding you on Twitter. You want to be ready for them. Make it as easy as possible for them to sign up to your list. Facebook is a great place to gather readers together. You can have groups. Facebook groups are really great. It's just another place for people to find you, learn about you, interact with you ... That's very important. It's the place where you can demonstrate that you're a real person. You answer questions. Your personality shines through. It's a really, really simple way to do that. Of course you can run that and monitor that through your phone now, which is what I do most of the time. Just take 5 minutes whilst you're in the queue and just answer questions from readers. Makes queues go a lot faster I find.

James: Okay, so we've got our mailing list, we've got our website; we now have some social media presence, numbers 4 and 5 to come.

Number 4, Mark.

Mark: This is something I was again; it is definitely the theme for this episode. I was late to get this sorted. You have to treat it like a business. I think it's important that that is done very early on. One kind of expression of that would be for me anyway, I was running it as what we'd call in the UK sole trader. I was just basically running it as Mark Dawson. That was tax entity. I was the tax entity for the first few books that I wrote. It's not a very tax-efficient way to get the money. I was in business. You could be paying full tax or not, which was ... I had a full-time job at the time, so I was paying full rate of tax in the UK. It just wasn't a very effective way to get that money out.

What I did about two years ago was to set up Unputdownable Limited; it's

the business, my writing business. The copyrights for those initial books were transferred into the business, and everything that I wrote from that stage onwards was run through the business.

All of my royalties now go into the business, commissions go into the business, any income comes in to Unputdownable, and then I have an accountant that we speak monthly, talking about money that's coming in. I'm at the level now where I like to have a kind of monthly bird's eye view of how healthy the business is, and which channels are working better than others. He produced me a monthly report, and then at the end of the year we'll look at the most tax-efficient way to get the money, to pay the tax obviously, but to get the money out again. I'm not like Jimmy Carr. Non UK people wouldn't maybe not have heard of that person.

James: He's that comedian who was creative with his tax affairs. Let's put it that way.

Mark: There've been a few of those, yeah. You certainly pay the tax that's due, but you don't pay more than you're supposed to pay, and be efficient about this. You're certainly more likely to be tax efficient to run income through companies, solely in the UK, but probably the case in the US as well. I would certainly say look in to that early on, it doesn't have to be expensive to set a company up, and it just makes things easier than a situation whereby you might suddenly be quite successful, and then you have to start trying to retro-fit things. It doesn't work quite as simply if you have to try and do that.

James: You talk about the incorporation, the tax status. In terms of having a business overview, having an accountant I think is totally very important, because having an accountant will say to you, do you know what, you're leaking money here. They'll spot something that you don't spot, like an old subscription or something, so you know what's this for? They challenge you a little bit, just to clarify where your money is going. That's always healthy to have an extra person have a view on that.

Some people might do that within their marriage if they have that sort of marriage where the wife might be a partner in the business, and they can do some of the books as well. Seeing it as an independent entity and having that business mind, and we would advise that, right from the outset, so that you treat this as a business with an income that needs to grow.

Mark: The way I look at it is that you assume that you're going to be successful. It's easy to think as you're sitting down with no people on your mailing list, just writing the first book. It's easy to assume, and let's be honest; the odds are against you making a lot of money from this. It's still a difficult thing to crack. People are managing through that, and more and more people are making good livings out of independently publishing these days.

I think it's healthy to assume that you're going to be successful, and with that assumption just think about what you would do to maximize the benefit that that would bring to you. A really easy way and a really straightforward way is to just set up your affairs in a tax-efficient manner right from the start. It's easier to do at the start than later on.

James: I'm really enjoying this checklist, particularly as a new author. It's gotten me ship shape I think. We are coming onto our final point, our fifth point Mark.

Mark: Let's just finish off the fourth one first. We've skipped one for understandable reasons. No one likes talking about this kind of stuff, but we're not going to be around forever, but our copyrights will. A copyright is going to last for the lifetime of the author plus 70 years on top, so when I shuffle off this mortal coil, I'm going to have at least 23 books, if I'm hit by a bus tomorrow, but hopefully 50 books by the time I stop writing. Those copyrights will extend for another 70 years in the UK. I can't remember what the state is in the US, but I think it's similar. I've got 2 kids, and I want them to benefit from those copyrights for as long as possible. A really sensible thing to do early on ... And this isn't just writers advice, it's

something that everyone should do anyway, but we all put it off, and I'm a lawyer and I haven't done this, which makes me an idiot, but ...

James: You sound like a lawyer when you're talking about this subject there.

Mark: I know. It's just that I'm about to offer a free will writing service. It's very sensible. Everyone should do this. It doesn't take very long and it's not expensive, but you should set up a will. Again, none of this is legal advice and I haven't been a lawyer for an awfully long time, so I'm rusty to say the least.

In this country at least, if you don't have a will, then if you die intestate, then certain provisions kick in, and that might mean that your assets don't go to the beneficiaries that you want them to go to. It just makes a lot more sense, and also it's more tax-efficient as well to get that sorted out right away. I would say, if you go and see an accountant to incorporate your company, then maybe pop into a lawyer as well and just say you just want to have a simple will so that everything is understood straightforward, and the provisions are in place should something unpleasant happen.

James: I think your children are definitely making their sounds known on the subject of what's going to be left to them. They are shouting loudly in the background. We can hear them.

Mark: Yes, they have just come back from nursery, and they'll probably be in the office in a minute.

James: That's what it's all about though isn't it, and your family is important and it's the easiest thing to, I know, I'm going to sound like a lawyer now, it's the easiest thing just to put off and put off and put off, but it's important to get done.

Mark: Come to Blatch and Dawson.

James: Blatch, Dawson and Dawson. Okay, excellent, and number 5. I like number 5.

I'm looking forward to going to number 5, number 5 is ...

Mark: It's just be super professional. It is connected to treating things like a business, but be super professional. I'll say as a general position what I look at now, and I wasn't always like this. In fact I was very far from this in the early days.

I want my books to be indistinguishable from the traditionally published books that I'm competing with. Lee Child sells a lot more books than I do, but we occasionally share space on the Amazon bestseller list. I may have a John Milton book with a Jack Reacher book next door to me, and I want readers to first of all look at those covers and not be able to tell which one is traditionally published and which one is independently published, and should they buy my book and they start to read it, I want them to be impressed with the formatting.

I certainly don't want them to find any typos or errors or anything like that. It's just everything needs to be absolutely tip top and sorted out, so that it's an identical experience. Let's be honest. There are all kinds of areas these days with traditional books as well. I certainly don't want to be any worse than a traditionally published book. I have high standards and I want to be the best. That means I'm certainly paying a cover designer, I am absolutely awful when it comes to that kind of artistic endeavor, and I know I am so I certainly won't be trying to put a cover together on paint. Believe me I've always seen plenty of authors try to do that, and they always look absolutely awful.

Not cheap. Certainly not cheap to get that done, but you can use companies like 99 Design, you get a cover for \$300 from them, but if it means saving up a bit, you should do it, because you're spending a lot of time on getting the book out there, it would be awful to send out in clothes

that have holes in them, to tease them with a terrible analogy. Certainly spend a bit to get the cover right.

The same goes for editorial. I would say at the very least at least it needs to be proof read by someone not connected to you. When I started writing independently with *The Black Mile*, I'm a lawyer and so I have an eye for detail, or so I thought. I thought I could do the proofreading myself. I discovered to my horror as the reviews started rolling in, points gathered, it was full of errors. A few readers would contact me with PDFs and the details of the errors that they found, and they were right. They were all there and it was just a case of being completely word blind. You'll discover this when you finish *James*, after you've got to 60,000 words and 70,000 and you've read that 3 or 4 times during the writing process, you will miss errors. It's absolutely guaranteed.

James: You can't proof your own writing.

Mark: No. It's impossible, you are accusing me of something there John.

James: You can't proof your own writing.

Mark: I can't proof my own writing. No one can.

James: One cannot proof their own writing.

Mark: One cannot. I was taught this, and I actually went back and paid someone to edit all of my Milton books. They've been edited about 3 times each. Generally speaking, I still occasionally get people saying there's errors, which is very annoying given that I've gone through that process. You definitely have to have that mindset. It's not good enough to just try and do it yourself, because it's just not going to work. The problem with that is, if you go look at *The Black Mile*, or *The Cleaner* the first Milton book and you scroll back to the first reviews, you'll see reviews that say, 2 stars, full of errors, and Amazon is not going to talk those reviews down. I'm not

even going to try on Amazon, because it's just not going to happen. Those are always going to be there.

Fortunately I've been able to kind of cover them with reviews saying that they like the book, and that there aren't errors, all that kind of thing, but those reviews will always be there, and it's a really good reminder for me personally to never cut corners like that because it's a false economy.

James: On the subject of covers which you mentioned there briefly, and perhaps not going down the DIY route if you're not comfortable with it. We are going to have on a future podcast Stuart Bache as a guest. He does your covers Mark and does a few others in the industry. He's done some Jonah Carey covers; he's worked in the industry, the traditional industry as well as independently. He is brilliant to talk to just in terms of the approach of the atmosphere of what you are trying to create and say with the cover, his personal approach and also some tips on those people who are more comfortable with using perhaps Photoshop or InDesign or whatever to create their own cover, so that's coming up in a future podcast.

Mark: Stuart is a genius, and still will do your cover, there are plenty of other people who are getting into that space now, as there are more and more writers who see the light and start to publish themselves. The industry grows around them, so it's reasonably easy now to get a really good pro cover without getting a second mortgage to pay for it, but it's definitely something that needs to be done.

James: Keeping yourself focused as when you are in the super professional mode and everything is going to be well polished and going to look good, and as you said the indistinguishable from the old traditional industry stuff. How do you make sure that you are making the right choices in terms of what you do with the book and where you put it etcetera?

Mark: I think the key thing to always bear in mind is just your mantra should be you want it to reach new readers, you want to entertain them, and then

you want to keep them. That should always be your focus, so ignore fads. If you go into forums right now, go to KBoards or any of the other forums where writers hang out, you'll see quite a lot of people complaining about Kindle Unlimited. They complained about Kindle Unlimited when the first iteration came along. It was KU apocalypse, they then started to complain when KU2 came a long and they started to pay for pages read rather than the borrows.

There are always going to be things like that, Amazon is always innovating, they are always going to be introducing new things, things will change. New players will come on board, some will fall away. As we are recording this today, Nook announced that they are not selling in the UK anymore. Things are always going to be changing.

The one thing that is going to be constant is you are providing content, you are telling stories, and you want to find the best way to get your stories into the hands of readers who are going to be prepared to pay for those stories. They will be sticking around with you for the long haul, so as you produce different stories, you get new books out, there are always going to be around to support your career, so that's going to be your focus.

I see too many people writing books, trying to take advantage of things like KU, and it's just stupid as it is, because things will change. All of those people who wrote dozens of short books to take advantage of KU number one version one, is you are paid by the borrow. They don't request, they're clever now that KU two is coming around, and then it's pages read and not books borrowed. Yeah I would say just focus on the main thing, and that's telling stories and getting them into the hands of readers.

James: Being super professional really good way to round of these 5 essential tips of people starting out. Mark, thank you very much. As ever your experience and your wisdom in this area is valuable to us who are starting out today. We have got a great guest in our next podcast, and I'm just going to tease you with that we have Sean Platt who is engaging, compelling, energetic, a poly math of our age, and a man of many

podcasts. It really is not an interview to miss, so we are looking forward to Sean, I'm looking forward to just talking to you again. Thank you very much indeed for joining us on the self publishing formula podcast; we'll see you next time.

Mark: Bye, bye.

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