EPISODE 65: KNOW WHAT SELLS BEFORE YOU WRITE – WITH BRIAN SPANGLER, GENRE REPORT

Intro Speaker: Two writers. One just starting out, the other a best-seller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests, as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James: Hello and welcome to the Self-Publishing Formula podcast. Here we are, Mark and James, and the voice you can hear now is James.

Mark: And the voice you can hear now is Mark.

James: And you might be watching on video.

Mark: You might be. In which case, you'd be able to see James and Mark wearing the same clothes as we were last week.

James: Yeah, well we've only got one set of clothes. We're busy people. We haven't got time to change. Maybe we'll change for next week.

Mark: Yes, maybe we will. That's a good idea. We'll have to pop down to the shop and buy some new clothes.

James: Because that's what you do when you change clothes isn't it?

Mark: Yes.

James: How's your week going? You're in writing mode again aren't you at the moment?

Mark: I am, yeah. I'm close to finishing the new John Milton book, which at the moment is called "The Alamo". That might change, but it's set in Brooklyn, in New York, which has been quite fun.

I've wanted to take him there for a long time. Down in Coney Island and Little Odessa, Brighton Beach, all that kind of area, so lots of atmospheric. Set during a blizzard in New York with loads and loads of snow. Really good fun. It's been a good one to write.

Kind of a more enclosed Milton. The last one, "Blackout" was the tenth and I made that deliberately quite global with a big cast of characters. This one's much more personal. Much more like an episode of "Equalizer", which is kind of the inspiration for Milton when I got started. Fans have been asking for that kind of book again. Looking forward to getting that finishing and getting it out there.

James: Yeah. I got a sneak peak of the covers you've had in from Stewart so far and they're looking good?

Mark: Yep. He's given me three concepts to look at and I'm pretty sure which one my favorite is. I'll also pop them on Facebook, into my Facebook group and I'd say 80% of readers are going the way that I am as well. And Stewart also prefers the one that's out in front. When you get that kind of response you can be pretty confident that's the one you need to go for.

James: If you're watching YouTube we'll stick them up as well so people can see those three concepts in from Stewart. Yeah, it's an interesting area there.

I think for those of us on the other side of the pond, New York has one kind of image, obviously of Manhattan and downtown. Funny enough, John and I, who's down there on the floor where we keep him, we flew into New York last year when on our way to NINC. We had a meeting in New York with Teachable Crew and we got held orbiting, the sinful seven, we got held

orbiting for about 15 minutes because of what they described as a VIP movement at JFK airport.

Mark: Yeah, Donald Trump went to the toilet.

James: Well, this was in the Obama days.

Mark: Okay.

James: So I think it was Obama, and they close off all the airspace for a bit while the aircraft comes in and goes out again. Anyway, so we circled exactly that area out in the coast, and you look down, and you think this looks nothing like anyone would imagine New York looked like. There's beaches, there's sand dunes, there's swamps.

It looked a little bit like Florida in places and lots of littler marinas and boats. I mean, the landscape changes quite a lot as you go towards the Atlantic Coast on that side, once you're the other side of the East River. Mark: Yeah. It's been fun too, and I've been there a little bit, but not much, but Google obviously is all over that, so Google Maps and Google Earth has been fantastic for research.

James: It's such a boon, isn't it? And I've done the same thing.

Mark: It's easy, yeah.

James: Even though it's close to you, for me, it's quite a long way, when you have somebody walk down a street and they walk past the phone box and past the post office to the church, you can do it exactly as that.

Mark: Yup. Yup. No, my books are always authentic in that way. It's so easy to do. And also, I think when you think it's authentic, that kind of authenticity transmits to your readers as well, so it's always something that I

try to make sure that I'm fairly fastidious about. So yeah, that'll be fun. Looking forward to that coming out.

The last book was the best launch I've had by miles, and each one is better than the last because my audience is getting bigger and bigger, obviously. So I'm looking forward to getting that one out there.

James: Good. Okay. Let's move onto our feature interview.

Now, this is something that you probably won't make too much use of, but a lot of authors at the beginning of their career, and myself included, do need to think about not just writing for creativity's sake, for our own sake, but for thinking how commercial is this going to be. Is this idea going to work?

Now, we had Dave Chesson on a few weeks ago, who's got a bit of software called KDPRocket, and he talked about his book idea validation process. The things you can do and can think about.

We mentioned, coincidentally at the time, Pat Flynn, whose book Will It Fly? So some excited posts from Pat Flynn this week because he found a copy of his book, a paper copy of his book, in Barnes and Noble on the bookshelf. In his life, he said this is a moment for him, so he's taken lots of pictures and brought his family in.

Mark: Oh my God. Yeah, okay.

James: For all of that. It's an achievement for him. Well done, Pat Flynn. So his idea, his book really is about market testing the idea. Now, when companies start up and they're new, they do a huge amount of this.

Big companies like Heinz and General Motors and so on, they spend a lot of time really examining a market, predoing any kind of big investment

work on the idea. Why don't we do the same? It's absolutely, there's the ability to do that now. So all these guys are putting together some ideas.

Now, what Brian Spangler, who's our guest today, has done is he's using data scraping, a concept we're familiar with from previous interviews, to … And it's almost a traffic light system. I'll let him explain it in the interview, but a way of you seeing what genres are A) popular, but B) not particularly competitive. For instance, would be a really good genre for you to go and enter.

So let's have the interview, and we'll have a chat off the back.

Brian Spangler: I am a software engineer by trade. I've been a software engineer for, oh my, it would date me. Over 25 years now. I mean, going back to pre-Windows, when it was just DOS and you and a keyboard, and Control-Alt-Delete was king. So it was the only way out of a slippery mess. I've pretty much covered every aspect.

I'm still in IT. I moved out of application development a couple months ago to concentrate on cybersecurity. That's just to broaden my experiences, but before I did that, there was a project I happened to be on that was very heavy into some newer client side technologies that I hadn't had a good amount of exposure with.

So you go home and you crack open the book. In the old days, you would go to Sam's or get a Sam's book and you would look through all the samples and you would find stuff to try and drive code development and learn it on the fly, and I absolutely did not want to do that again. It was ad nauseum. I've done that so many times.

In the meantime, at night, I like to write books. Well, I try. I write short stories. Sometimes, they turn into a book. Sometimes, they turn into nothing and they sit in the Pages app and never go anywhere.

In 2016, I had a contract with one in print that wasn't the best experience, and I really, one of the things in my writing experience that I've found has kind of hurt but has helped, that some authors find very helpful for them, is I span genres.

I had written originally in a supernatural, then a paranormal/supernatural called Superman's Cape, and I had moved onto a contemporary fiction called An Order of Coffee and Tears, which is still one of the better-selling books, and I never had a sequel for it, and I moved onto dystopian and then doing crime thrillers.

I jump around. Whatever story is renting space in my head is generally the story that comes out, but growing into this market, or growing into a market, gaining readers, I'm starting to learn from KBoards and from all the forums online that you really need to, in addition to making your craft better, you need to find your readers.

Chris Fox did an excellent book called Write to Market, and when that was becoming popular, I had already been looking and studying Amazon's categories. I've always studied the categories and the rankings.

I'm a systems engineer, a software engineer. I like numbers. I can't help it. I look at a website, and while you'll see content or others will see content and they'll see the styling, I'll go right to the inspector and look under the code, look underneath and look at the JavaScript or I'll look at the CSS and see how they styled a certain element because I want to learn from that.

But when it comes to Amazon and the rankings, it was always this, well, what is the magic recipe there? How are they doing that? And what does it mean to me?

James: Yeah.

Brian Spangler: So selfishly, when I started to develop an app, and I wanted to use a sample app, the very first thing I thought to do was let me start collecting data and see what's what in the real world. If we're trying to find, or if we're trying to build a trend, or trying to build heuristics around something, the very first thing you do is just flat out collect data.

So looking at fiction because I don't, I'm not familiar with non-fiction, although non-fiction could be added. Looking at just fiction, I started collecting data, and that was, that's got to be about seven or eight months ago, where it's basically there's a job that runs in the backend, and couple times a day, five or six I think, and all it does is collect data.

Then it was my turn to step in and some of those technologies like Bootstrap and Knockout.js, all the client side stuff that I really, really needed to get into, I started to play around with, and next thing you know, I had a website. And that's what Genre Report is.

James: And some people will not know what Bootstrap is, but they don't have to know a lot of the technical details that you're talking about.

Brian Spangler: No.

James: So what you've created here is a portal that people can use. Let's wind back a little bit. You talked about your, you just sit down, you like to write, so the genre, you're not necessarily genre specific.

Brian Spangler: Right.

James: And therefore, this is something that this has obviously come from that.

Brian Spangler: Yup.

James: Is Genre Report something that's going to work for people who work more narrowly than you before we move into the detail?

Brian Spangler: That's a great question. One of the questions I was thinking you might ask when I walked in, when I wanted to sit down to this was who would want to use this?

So for me, I'll speak to me first because I think of me selfishly, I had no idea what I would want to write to next. All I knew was I did not want to come up with a great story, and then plop it into a category that nobody would ever see, and one of the best things to do was look at the data.

Find a category that had a healthy number of readers and, whether they're voracious or not, that read a lot of books, but not be overly competitive where I just had no chance of visibility.

Success on Amazon, in my opinion, it's about visibility. If you don't have visibility, I mean, you can gain it elsewhere. There's the Facebook ads. Mark does a terrific set of videos on that. There's AMS. There's BookBub.

But if you're just looking to find a home for your books, that's where this Genre Report, you could at least get, instead of spending hours and hours and hours and hours going across all the Amazon pages and looking at the rankings and the top 100, looking at the keywords, this is that one place you could go just to get the homework done.

James: Okay.

Brian Spangler: Think of it as like, you know, I've got a lot of homework to do. Here's one place I can go. I can have it done in five minutes, and that was really my first inclination was just to get this in here so I could find categories that fit me.

For example, I'm working on a crime thriller right now, and I happened to find a category about two or three, about a month ago now, about a month ago, and my story is working into that category. In other words, instead of the story taking place in the inner cities of Philadelphia, it is now taking place elsewhere in the country and pulls in elements of that area of the country so it fits within the category.

And I'm also bringing in characters and the set of detectives and everything that fit that category. Cover will fit that category. Keywords will fit that category. I want to give that book every opportunity I can, and so when a reader comes across it because they happen to be browsing that category, they click on it. Because if they pass it over like they've done before, then I've lost.

James: Yeah.

Brian Spangler: This just gets me that extra edge. You've got milliseconds, I think, by the time somebody looks at your book and then moves onto the next one. So get it while you can, and one of the better things that people often overlook is where you put your book.

So now for the narrow, if you're, like I think of Mark Dawson. He's got an audience. He has his readers. How would he use this? How would he want to look at Genre Report – that's not the easiest one to say – how would he look at this website and say, "What's it going to do for me?"

One of the things I mentioned earlier is I collect data. So five, six times a day, it's collecting all this data, and now what am I going to do with all this data?

I added this trends and history reporting so that you could go in and you could pick a particular category that you've done well in, or maybe you're not doing as well in, and you can now bring up I think it's like 10 or 12 different charts going back six months or more, and you can see maybe the

page count changed. Maybe the pricing changed. Maybe the average rank across the top 100 has shifted.

What would that tell me? That might tell me that the readers are moving to another – it's reader shift. Maybe they're moving to a peer category within that, peer subcategory within that parent category. They're not as interested in post apocalyptic. They're interested in genetic engineering under science fiction.

That's one of the reasons I did the trends and history is to try and give you an idea of where the readers are, have they moved. Maybe the styling in the covers have changed. Maybe the expectation on page count has changed.

For the person who already has a set of readers, already has their market, this will let them just tap into any shifts that might be taking place, and maybe even get ahead of that shift.

One of the features that I want to do, this is another JavaScript framework or library that I want to play with is heat maps. I've got all this data, let me put a heat map up there and actually visualize it – because I love visualizations – visualizing the shifting readers. It's nothing but, it might be nothing more than eye candy, but it sure is fun looking. It's very entertaining.

James: That sounds great. We should just say that I think you said to me that at the moment, it's free, is that right?

You're looking for people to join?

Brian Spangler: There's 1000 users I think right now. Something like that. It has a couple users a day. It's really, there's one, two, three, five servers that are running in the backend to keep it going.

It's really, at this stage, it's an exercise for me, for fun. It's to learn both on the writer side and the market side and finding categories, but also to work my skillset up because I have to stay, in my field, you have to stay on top of it because the landscape is ever-changing. Just like readership is ever-changing, landscape in technology's forever changing.

You can spend six months on one project and all of a sudden find yourself, well, now you're a little bit behind everybody else, and so this is one of my excuses to keep going.

James: A good exercise for you from your professional career as well.

Brian Spangler: It is. It is.

James: I think you're right to start off writing it for yourself because I think that's how projects work when they're very specific and then you can develop over time. You've already got 1000 people who are using it, and you must have some data on how people are using it.

I guess some of them are not using it at all and some are using it a lot.

What's the feedback like?

Brian Spangler: I've gotten quite a bit of feedback, some excellent feedback. One of the earliest pieces of feedback was resulted in what's called the Top 100 tool. This was an individual, I'll put a shout out there, Susan May, you're terrific, I love you, she's an awesome writer.

She was doing a lot of homework trying to find categories for books that already existed, and I've done this, too. We've all done this where it's like Amazon's changed their categories. Just in fiction, I think I captured data on almost 1300 a day. Easy, easy 1300 categories and subcategories. And that's a very small number compared to the number of categories on a whole.

And so she had this need where she's like rather than spend half my day finding categories that my book would place well for that additional bump in visibility, is there a way you could do that through this app. So born was the Top 100 tool.

You put in your ASIN, you put in the current rank, you pick some categories and peer categories. You can filter on popularity. And a report pops up and it tells you exactly what place it will be within the Top 100 of a given category, or show you above the 100, and that's of course above the 100 would be an estimated.

James: Yeah.

Brian Spangler: So at that point, it's just an email exercise to KDP saying place my book here so you can gain that extra visibility.

The feedback is adding to the site. So it's, if you think in terms of a project plan, they become my gr tickets and my gr tickets for new tasks that I'm going to work in in an upcoming sprint.

Not all the features work. I've gotten some for non-fiction. That's a bigger effort because I would have to scale the infrastructure because there's just that many more non-fiction categories than there are fiction categories. So then it just becomes an exercise of volume. The databases would and the backend cache would have to be extended.

The one really, really good one I'll mention, Kindle Shorts. Hadn't even looked at it. It was part of the bestsellers list. I work off the bestsellers list because that's what my algorithm for doing the ranking and determining whether you're competitive category or a popular category or both or not both.

Somebody mentioned could you do Kindle Shorts, and within a day, I added Kindle Shorts. So while everybody else was at six months of data, they're now at, the Kindle Shorts are about a month of data. So it's just a matter of adding it, and then once it gets added to the job, it starts to populate on the screen automatically.

James: I know just having a look through now, and I love the visualizations as well. It helps people like me who don't necessarily jump at the chance of reading through a table of data. At a glance, really, it tells those stories.

And there's two things that I think, obviously, you've got the popularity score and you've got a competitive score next to that. And in the case, I've looked up a very popular genre, so I've got a green popularity score, but a red competitive.

Brian Spangler: Oh, yeah.

James: In other words, you're going to be fighting for space there.

Brian Spangler: You are, yeah.

James: The other thing that struck me quite early on was the pricing. This is a pretty good way, because that's a difficult area, pricing, and I don't think anyone's got it thoroughly cracked in terms of a formula, but here you have empirical evidence of what people are doing at the successful end of that genre in terms of price.

Brian Spangler: They raise their price.

James: They raise it?

Brian Spangler: Yeah, that's what I, yeah, I've been finding they raise their price. When you start seeing the more popular genres over time. If it went from say yellow-orange to red, meaning the competitiveness went up

because the popularity went up, it's generally going to have the higher rank, or the better rank, not higher, the better rank. You will sometimes see a trend in raising the price, and that's, if you think about that, I've known authors that do that forever.

If you've got a book in the sub-1000, you're going to raise your price. You can raise your price. Some, I generally don't see it go the other direction.

James: Yeah. So the average price of thrillers is $5.27 and the top end of that, that's pretty high.

Brian Spangler: Yeah. There is some work I need to do in pricing because you will once in awhile receive, and I'll see this in the data, a 99 cent will make it in the top 100 as like a BookBub, and it might have a longer tail, and it'll stay there.

So right now, where pricing's average, it should be rethought in some degree, but over time, it doesn't, I don't know that it works in as part of the trend.

James: Yeah, okay.

Brian Spangler: The trend overall. The trend overall will show you a curve or positive or negative.

James: Okay. Well, I'm looking now. Thriller obviously was a busy and popular genre. I've switched over just to have a look at LGBT as a slightly more specialist genre, and now I'm getting a real mixture there of gray, yellow, green for competitive areas, and once you start breaking it down.

So if that was a broad area that you thought you might write in, I can see straightaway how you can see there's that special mix of popular but not that competitive areas for you to focus in on, and then you can look at average price.

I can see, just at a glance, Brian, that this is going to be something that I think will work for a lot of people. I think it's going to be incredibly useful.

Brian Spangler: Oh, I'm glad.

James: Just going back a little bit, sorry, maybe I missed it when I asked about the sort of business model behind it.

It's free at the moment. Do you think you're going to charge at some point?

Is it something you're going to find another way of having a revenue stream geared around it?

Brian Spangler: The only reason I would charge for it is if there was enough use of it on a daily basis where the backend services began to go up in price, or where I just couldn't afford to keep it. Because right now, I think I spend, it's not the cheapest, it's $100 or $200, $150 or something like that to keep it going, and it was my own project.

It was my own thing, so I had taken some book money and funded it for like through the middle of 2017 on my own just to keep the backend servers running, but it's when you start to exceed a certain bandwidth and like I have scaling out in Amazon, some AC2 instances.

I'm also using Azure, so I believe in dividing the architecture up. So the cost will go up as the usage goes up, and at that point. I may do a donation if people really are using it, but if the donations is something, if I opt out of donations then maybe a PayPal button. Then the PayPal button would be yours to use, unlimited usage, $25 a year. Something like that.

But I have been asking some of the authors who have been providing feedback, what would you be willing to pay for this? Is it something you would use every day? Maybe not.

Is it something you would use as you come into a new project? Yes. Is it something you would use to do some work on existing books? Yes, but it isn't something that you would use every single day, unless you're a publisher. If you're a publisher, and if you're a small publisher, and you're supporting five to ten authors and all their books, you're going to use this thing every day.

James: Yeah.

Brian Spangler: Because you're going to be jockeying the books around, changing keywords. Your emails to KDP are probably tens times most of ours, and Amazon's categories, the profile of the category changes. The profile of the categories on a whole change often.

Amazon will add new subcategories, which they'll suddenly appear in the database and it's like oh, there's an opportunity, and they'll move some of their books into it, and then I'll see if one of mine might fit and then send KDP an email and it's all about visibility. But for now, it's free.

James: Yeah, as you said, all about visibility. And without getting too technical here, how do you mine this information? Because obviously, this is all publicly available. It's just a case of setting something up that's going to gather it. I'm reasonably curious, as long as this doesn't get mind-boggling, as to how you do that.

Without getting too technical, how do you mine this information?

Brian Spangler: There are an enormous number of solutions for scraping data, and I don't use any of those. So it's basically, under the covers, I have a set of main categories, or main categories that would be the fiction bestseller ones that I start with, and if you think of like your tree and navigating down a tree, this category has thee subcategories, which have

these subcategories. I'll go through each of those and basically load the page and pull the data, but I only pull the data that is of interest.
Then there's also the marketing API that Amazon supports to give you, to try and to help you fill in the blanks, and for those, that's where there's an affiliate tag. So if you've ever done anything with affiliate earnings, there's a combination of the two that together, allow me to develop a footprint, or develop the common dataset that I call it, for a given category.

Then I collect that five, six times a day because it changes with the rankings and everything like that, and then at the, on a nightly, there is a job that runs that squishes it down into one entry per category, because there wouldn't be the need to keep five, the trend, there wouldn't be the need to keep the five to six a day, which I call hourlies, versus just the one if you're doing trend reports.

So that's like a job that runs on other servers, removed of the fronted servers, but then there's the technical side, there's the database and there's mem cache, and just so that the user experience is very, very fast.

So common queries. Like there's an ad hoc query. That's a good one. There's an ad hoc query report facility, so if you do an ad hoc query, I'll cache that so that the next person who might have the same query by chance doesn't have to go back to the back end and get it all over again, but then it refreshes every couple hours.

James: Right. All set up. Well, I did understand that, and the result of it is this site which is a very, very easy to use way of really digging into the detail of a genre that either you right in or you're thinking about writing in.
And as you say, I suppose this is, for most of us, maybe two or three times a year when you're sitting down and making fairly big decisions about what direction your next book's going to go in, what direction your career's going to go in, and maybe people want to change genre or tweak it.

Brian Spangler: Yes.

James: Time spent with this tool, I'm just saying this, I'm going to say this, is going to be time well spent. It's going to have a positive impact on your career. So it's genrereport.com, which I said at the beginning before the interview so people can follow along whilst we're doing this, and yeah, get in there while it's cheap.

Brian Spangler: While it's free.

James: While it's free. As cheap as it can be.

Brian Spangler: I will say, if I could add to that, if you are an author, if you're a writer, and you find yourself in a position that I found myself in where you were, it was almost like a sad and utter despair of having all these stories, having the need or the want to write, but having no idea of what to write to because you can't find readers, or you find yourself in a crowded room, meaning a category, and you just really want readers to find your book and you want that visibility.

Spend a little time on the site and find a category that you, oh, you know what, check out the books. For every category, I give you a sampling of the books so that you click on it and you can say you know what, this story would fit here if I adjust it or massage it, or if you just have a premise of a story, you could say oh, this is a category I would love to write to.

If you're lucky and you hit the lottery, you might actually find one of the categories you overlooked that you happen to read and you happen to love, and that just made it that much easier a decision.

James: Brian, thank you so much. Part of the SPF community and we're always, we have a bright and vibrant set of folks in our community and to see people working hard, again, in the spirit of sharing your own skills to the benefit of others, it's great. So thank you very much indeed, and thank you for coming onto the podcast.

Brian Spangler: Oh, you're welcome. It's been a blast. Thank you.

James: Brian Spangler. One of these techy guys who understands how to use that technology not just to play on his Xbox 360 or write games, but to use it for commercial gain.

Mark: His Xbox 360? What decade are you in?

James: Oh, yeah, sorry about that, yeah. One. Our Xbox One's just blown actually, by the way, so if Microsoft are listening, I'll give you my address. I thought it was really interesting, and it seemed to work because I was, during the interview, I was examining some of the areas, and I could immediately start to drill down doing the subcategories, and start, it became a bit addictive trying to spot that golden place where there are lots of readers looking for books and not too many books crowding the market.

Mark: It's a really good tool. Brian's done a really great job on that, and he's improved it. I looked at a beta version of it and made some suggestions to make it a little cleaner and a bit more, make the important data more obvious, and I think he's done a really excellent job on that.

It ties in also with an interesting debate that's going on in the indie community at the moment, with on the one hand, a camp that are only interested in writing what they want to write, and on the other hand, you've got a camp – including authors like Chris Fox, who's a lovely guy which we definitely need to get onto the podcast – he's suggesting that writers write more to market.

So in other words, finding out, using a tool like Brian's tool to find out where the spaces are in the market that can be filled with your books. This debate does get quite heated sometimes because on the one hand, people are saying you're selling out by writing for money, and on the other hand, people are going well, you're just being naïve writing with no

expectation of an audience is basically masturbation, and there's that kind of debate going on all the time.

Now, for me, I think the path that you want to strike is somewhere in the middle. You've got to think about it as a Venn diagram for me, so on the one hand, you've got one big circle which is what you want to write, what you enjoy reading, what you'd like writing.

On the other hand, you've got to have another circle which is what using a tool like Brian's tool is to find out what the market is looking for. And then the intersection, where those two circles overlap, that is your sweet spot. So it's got to be something that you would enjoy writing and something you'd also enjoy reading, but also somewhere where there is a market.

I think if you go too much either way, it's going to be a soulless exercise that you won't enjoy, or you'll be writing something and you'll never sell anything to anyone because there is no market for it.

These tools are really useful, and Brian's is a really good one, but I don't think just relying on them slavishly is not going to make you a happy or successful writer. It's a tool that you can use that you can influence your decision, but it shouldn't be the main thing that guides you.

James: Sounds like wise words, and I think that that process of striking that balance, for me, goes beyond the big choice at the beginning of what genre, but actually, in the editing process as well.

I'm certainly feeling my way through. I was reading through my latest editor's notes, and she is definitely saying things that wouldn't, that I, in my mind, I'm writing for a more educated audience.

An audience who, like me, share a passion and interest in this area, and she's pointing out that most people won't necessarily know, for instance, that C&D's politics of the 1960s is as familiar to them as it is to me.

So I'm having to dumb down, sort of crude expression, and I don't really mean it like dumb down, but I'm having to write in a way that I wouldn't. The person in my mind who's bought my book wouldn't need me to, but she's not thinking about that. She's thinking about my book being commercially successful.

Mark: That's right.

James: I think even within the editing process, there's that goes on.

Mark: Yeah, absolutely. It's slightly, that's a down the line consideration, but yeah, you need to always have one mind on how big your potential readership is and not giving them all the information they need, perhaps the information they don't need. Just making sure that it's the experience that they want to get at the end of the day.

James: And what I also love about Brian's interview is I love the fact that there is, there are so many clever people out there in our community who think, "Do you know what? This might work."

I don't think Brian sat there thinking this is going to make me a millionaire. Brian thought I can do this and this could be useful, and that's always the beginning of probably a good business for him. I hope it is.

Mark: He's got a data background. Data Guy has it, obviously, has a giveaway as a background. Chris Fox, who I just mentioned, also works in data, so these are, they probably wouldn't mind me describing them as geeks, and geek is kind of a badge of honor these days, but they're geeks who also love to write, too.

So yeah, bringing that kind of mindset into the indie space. I'm nowhere near as good at that as that kind of level of data handling, but I can appreciate it and I can work out spreadsheets and I do that quite a lot, but

to have those kinds of guys, real experts coming and providing us with tools and ways to understand the data better is to everyone's benefit.

James: Yeah, love a good spreadsheet. Okay, that's it. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you, Mark. Thank you to our guest, Brian Spangler, and we'll speak to you again, have a great week, next week.

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