PODCAST 73: GETTING AHEAD OF THE CURVE WITH AN AUTHOR APP – WITH APP DEVELOPER STUART GRANT

Speaker 1: 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 and welcome to the Self-Publishing Formula podcast with Mark and James, broadcasting to you from the heart of the United Kingdom in a county called Wiltshire. Wiltshire in southern UK in the world. Doesn't really matter where we are. There's people in our digital space who do their stuff on the beach in the Philippines, isn't there? That's the beauty of this. But we've chosen Wiltshire.

Mark Dawson: We have, as James says in an East Anglian accent.

James BLatch: What is it? Then you do a Wiltshire accent.

Mark Dawson: No, no. I wouldn't embarrass myself with it. I know I can't do it.

James BLatch: See, I stick myself out there. I've got the courage to go for it, and then I get criticized.

You're very jealous, because I've got my Billy T-shirt on, if you're watching on YouTube, which is a Candice Neistat T-shirt brand, and I'm a big fan of her hubby, Casey Neistat.

Mark Dawson: Very good. Who's that? Do we know him?

James BLatch: Who is that? A huge YouTuber. Look up Casey Neistat.

Mark Dawson: Oh, that one. Okay. Yes, yes, I know who you mean.

James BLatch: Yeah, yeah. He's great. And we should do T-shirts. We do a mug.

Mark Dawson: We do a mug. I'm holding it up now for those watching. For those not watching, this thing has, James always forgets most of our audience listens.

James BLatch: Well-

Mark Dawson: Let me describe it. It's a lovely, excellent mug from a fine company in the UK, with our lovely branding on and a nice shade of yellow-

James Blatch: It's very nice.

Mark Dawson: … to maybe hide the fact that I haven't washed this for a little bit.

James BLatch: Almost Cambridge United yellow.

Mark Dawson: It's very nice, yes. We're going to be giving away some of these to people who follow us on patreon.com.

James BLatch: Yes. If you subscribe to us on Patreon, you are in with a chance of winning a mug.

You're also in with a chance of winning $750 worth of premium course, and you're definitely going to be helping us produce the podcast, become part of the production team effectively, by helping with the funding of the podcast, which is, as it happens, quite expensive to produce. But we love doing this.

Mark Dawson: James had a very large steak and kidney pie last night.

It was extremely expensive. So you'll be funding James' steak and kidney pie habit. And also John. John had a steak and kidney pie, too. He's nodding right now.

James BLatch: Yeah. I woke up not needing breakfast, put it that way. Yeah. So if you go to patreon.com/spfpodcast, you will see us. And Patreon's spelled p-a-t-r-e-o-n.

We'd love you to be there, and we've said, at the beginning of this episode, hello to our first batch of Patreon subscribers. And, in fact, let's choose two of them to send mugs to. So I'm going to randomly do that. I'm going to announce that some point in the future. Complicated this, isn't it?

Okay. Now, last week we talked to Chloe Esposito. The week before, we talked to J. Thorn, and this week I promised you something that was going back to the side of things that we talk about quite a lot, which is about how you market, how you talk to your readers, how you sell your books, ultimately.

And this is an area that is a little bit underexploited, certainly by us and by most authors, but we have a strong advocate of it in our SPF community, a man called Stuart Grant, and we're talking about apps. So the apps that pop up on your phone from the App Store on Apple, or Android, Google, it's called Google Play Store, I believe.

Mark Dawson: Move on.

James BLatch: Well, hang on. Got to get this, right?

Mark Dawson: Google. Yes. Google store? I don't know. I'm an Apple guy, so yes.

James BLatch: Google. I think it's Google Play. Yes, well I am as well.

Mark Dawson: Well Google Play is where you get your books from, so could be that.

James BLatch: Yes. I think it's that. And Stuart, I'd say he will talk about this in the interview, but we should announce, and we are going to announce at this moment that Stuart has created and we are launching today the SPF app.

It's been under a bit of a soft launch, so it's been there in the background and people have found it. In fact, a hundred or so of you found it without us advertising it or mentioning it, which goes to prove Stuart's point that people search on the App Store for things that they're interested in. It's a place where people look for stuff, which is why he says everyone should be there.

The SPF app, you can search for it on the various stores, Google Play Store, Apple App Store, and just search for Mark Dawson's Self Publishing Formula, or Self Publishing Formula, or SPF and it should come up and you can download that.

It's a really good one-stop place to listen to the podcast, to watch it on YouTube, to access a course if you're part of that, to get the free courses that we offer, and all sorts of things.

And you also get little notifications from time to time to tell you about new content that's around. So that's been launched today.

Now, Stuart lives not too far away from me in East Anglia, as we say, not Wiltshire. We had decided, because it was a beautiful, very hot, sunny day, to meet up in Cambridge, lovely Cambridge, and had a chat with him on the wall of King's Parade outside King's College.

No video for this, but we did take some stills. So we're going to hear from Stuart.

He's going to talk a bit about the app that he's created for us, but our primary interest here is probably going to be his ideas for author apps and how they can benefit you to reach out to your readers and to attract new readers and there's a very special offer for a couple of writers towards the end of the interview, so stay tuned for that.

We've recorded podcast interviews in some nice locations in the past, sitting on the beach, but I think where we are now, and I'll have to … We'll take a picture. Remind me take a picture for the YouTube version, Stuart. We're sitting on the wall at King's Parade in Cambridge. And we have King's College Chapel behind us, one of the great iconic sites of Cambridge, and of the UK, really. It's a place packed with tourists and people going about their business, so you're going to hear quite a few bikes going past. We should also say I think it's the hottest day of the year, is it not?

Stuart Grant: It feels like it. I mean, we're in the 30s today, which is very unusual for June in the UK, but it is absolutely beautiful.

James Blatch: Wimbledon's about to start, so presumably it will start raining at any moment. Anyway, by the time that … We were just joking by the time this interview goes out we'll be sitting shivering, back to normal. But it's beautiful today. You wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

So yeah, a little bit of noises off as we have this interview. But we sit in medieval England. I mean this is medieval England. The Colleges behind us all date back to the 1500s, and we're talking about something that's bang up to date, which is, even for people who have good websites and podcasts and so on, apps are still that little bit further on in terms of in people's minds. And yet we all use apps a lot.

This is your thing, really, Stuart, isn't it? What's driven you towards apps and why are you so excited about them?

Stuart Grant: For me, I mean Android and Google and Apple are the biggest companies in the world, and they haven't invented these platforms for fun. I think they developed them because they see that people want fast, instant access to the brands and the content that they like and they want a relationship with, and I think apps is the route to that.

We know, all of us, that mobile phones are just exponential in terms of growth. I read a stat the other day that said there's more mobile phones in the world than there are people, which means some people must have four.

But I think that platform is just growing at an exponential rate and apps are the kind of bread and butter of that platform.

James Blatch: I think one of those other stats, I mean I think you may have told me this a few months ago, was that the App Store is very highly rated in terms of being one of the search engines in itself.

Stuart Grant: Absolutely, yeah. People are now searching on the App Store for products and services.

So, for example, here you might search Cambridge hairdressers, you know, because you want a haircut, and therefore you'd find an app that might be registered to those kind of key words.

Download the app, find the hairdresser, and so on.

I think it's an amazing growth, and I mean Apple themselves I think are shocked by the speed at which the App Store's developed. An amazing stat I read the other day was that it took 13 years for TV to hit 50 million users. It took the App Store 17 months.

James Blatch: That's incredible, isn't it? Should just say that a very large family of Japanese tourists has stopped right next to us and are taking a picture of a shop opposite, but it's a little bit noisy.

In terms of apps, we're going to do two parts to this interview. One is you've developed an app for SPF, and we're launching that and people can download that app. It's been in soft beta for a while, so some people have found it just by having a little nose around, exactly as we were just discussing, searching for Self Publishing Formula or Mark Dawson on the App Store it would have come up.

And a hundred plus people have downloaded and are using it. But that's just so that we could prove the concept. Mark's pretty excited about it. I am as well, and so we're now going with a full launch of it so we're going to give out the details shortly.

So we're going to talk about that, and that might be applicable to some people's businesses, but then we're going to talk specifically about why this is of interest to authors and how an app can be used by an author. I know you've put an exciting sort of giveaway/beta program that we'll come to.

Let us talk about the app you've developed for SPF.

Stuart Grant: Okay. So the concept for me, in terms of businesses using apps, is that they are a great way to create a relationship between the user and the brand, and it consolidates everything that a brand is doing into one place.

So rather than saying to users, "Go and find us on Facebook," or, "Go and find us on YouTube," or whatever, you can just say, "Download our app and everything we do in terms of our assets across the net are confined within the app."

Really, it's about shortening the journey for the user to find your content and have it to hand. Obviously, push notifications, which are such a strong and clever way of communicating to people. I mean, those of you that know about mailing lists will know that it's an open rate of around 20% for an email campaign.

James BLatch: You did very well to keep talking there, because a lorry's just collided with a bollard. Have you seen that scene in Austin Powers where the guy does a 15 point turn, a 25 point turn.

He's going to back into a bin as well. Anyways, carry on. Distracting. We must go back to the studio at some point so we can focus.
I want to talk to you about push notifications specifically. Because it's probably the blue ribbon part of the app is the push notifications.

Stuart Grant: Totally.

James BLatch: Why are they so effective?

Stuart Grant: They're so effective because people read them.

You post a Facebook post, you post a Twitter update, and it's gone within 15 minutes. So if I don't log on to that platform when you've posted it, the chances are, unless you've paid for me to see it, I'm not going to see it.
A push notification appears on the front screen of the phone. You have to read it before you open your phone. It's directing you to certain places within the app, and as I say, they have an industry recognized figure of around 96% open and read rate.

James BLatch: And that figure is incredibly high if people who are already running their mailing lists will check their open rates and know that even a vibrant, dynamic organization like SPF does not have 96% open rates on its emails.

Stuart Grant: No.

James BLatch: That's an incredibly high figure. I guess over time, maybe 10 years in the future, those open rates might come down as this becomes more common, but we've got a pretty good run at the moment of apps being the new thing and not many people embracing them.

Stuart Grant: Absolutely. And people are familiar with apps. I mean, more and more people are downloading them.

The average person has around 119 apps on their phone. So they are used to having apps that are related to brands that they want to know about. I think for something like the SPF community, there's a huge interest in what happens. People want to know what's going on, and to be able to communicate to users on the move, if you like, and send them a push notification.
For example, the new podcast is live, and then direct them exactly to the page you want them to go to listen to it is a phenomenal benefit. It just removes those steps, it removes me having to go into my email account or via Google or anything. It's just there on the device that basically I've got stuck to my hip.

James BLatch: Yeah. They're all surgically placed on us now, and they will be one day, actually surgically placed on us, chips on our wrist.
The SPF app, let's talk about that more specifically. What does it offer? What does it look like?

Stuart Grant: The SPF app was an idea around putting all of your content into one place. You can access the podcast, you can sign up for the mailing lists, you can look at the different courses that you offer, people can log into their courses if they've purchased them and actually consume their course on the app on the move and watch the videos and whatnot.

Obviously, you can use it to communicate to users with push notifications and to tell them information about the courses or what the podcasts, or whatever.

It's a data collection point for you, so people can sign up within the app to anything that you might be offering, they can access the SPF vault. Anything you've got we can put into the app, and it just means it's all in one place.

Even the Facebook groups. I can access all the Facebook groups via the app.

That was the concept behind it, seeing how the community adopt that and whether or not, which I hope they will, use it voraciously and with passion in terms of downloading it and getting a lot of content from it, all in one place.

James BLatch: And the YouTube, I think it links directly to our YouTube channel as well, so podcasts, you can sit there on the train and in one place watch the podcast on the YouTube.

Stuart Grant: Exactly. And obviously somebody could do that via YouTube, but again, it's just about reducing that journey.

I know as a user, I open the podcast, click the YouTube tab, and there it is. I don't have to go into YouTube, search for Self Publishing Formula, then find the right video. It's just there straightaway.

James BLatch: This isn't going to be a very video heavy one, this, because I haven't set up a camera.

Stuart Grant: No.

James BLatch: Because it would be stolen if I put a camera in front of us on this busy walkway in Cambridge. But we will get a photograph.

People can download the app, and the quickest and easiest way I guess is to do what we talked about earlier, which is a search in the App Store.

Stuart Grant: Exactly. Yeah. Just open the App Store, search for Self Publishing Formula or put in Mark Dawson, and much like websites, you know, we are where we were maybe 10 or 15 years ago where people need to claim their space on the App Store.

They need that domain, if you like, and in the background we use SEO, or that's called App Store optimization.

So behind the app there are keywords that, if people search, it will come up with that app. It's very similar principle to the internet and websites. But yes, any search in any of the app stores will hopefully find the app.

James BLatch: And there's a special reason to download it at this stage, which we'll come on to at the end of the interview, but an opportunity for you, as an author, to get an app for yourself for free from Stuart, because he's looking for a couple of beta testers as he takes this on from the concept of SPF having an app to the concept of authors having an app. And potentially that being a little bit of business for you, hopefully, Stuart, but also another opportunity for authors to stake their digital real estate, in this case on the App Store. So let's move on to that aspect of it then. How is this going to work for authors?

Stuart Grant: Again, it's about making that relationship with your users. If I'm a reader of take an example, Lee Child, I might be really interested in when his latest releases are, I might be interested in book tours, I might be interested in signing up to his mail list if he had one, or whatever it might be.

Having his brand on my phone immediately establishes a relationship with him and I know that by having the app, I'm hopefully going to get the latest. And I'm not going to have to go and find it, you know? I don't have to scour

through Facebook pages or whatever. I can just open the app and there it should be.

And that, for me, is one of the key reasons why authors might want an app, because they can provide all of those links to all the app stores in one place, much like the website that we put together for Mark's Phoenix book. He wanted somewhere where people could find all of the links for that book. And that's a need for authors. They need to be able to host that information somewhere.

And having it on an app, we all know that more purchases are made on mobile phones than on desktops, so being able to click through to Amazon and download the book on the bus is an amazing advantage.

Obviously there's a mailing list point to this. People open the app and it will ask you if you want to sign up to mailing lists really simply, just one click. Galleries, if there were book covers, author biographies, you know, whole range of things that could be within the YouTube channels. You know, we talked about podcasts, everything that an author has can be put into this one easy to use functional app.

James BLatch: I suppose we have our author websites where we can list our books, et cetera, and this is, in its simplest term, it's the same thing. But in a new place that's probably a little bit closer and more personal to the person, because it's on their handheld device.

Stuart Grant: It is. Yeah. It's very similar. The difference is, for me, is that it's to get to your website, I need to go via Google and then I need to find your website.

And your website, or an author's website, can't communicate to me, whereas an app, using the power of push notifications for a start, can. It can talk to me. It can tell me about what's going on.

A lot of websites are really two-dimensional leaflets. They don't do anything, whereas an app hopefully has a level of engagement. And that's the significant difference.

James BLatch: If we talk about it commercially, people have two things I guess they do as outreach.

One is they try to contact new readers and get their email address, so this is on their mailing list. And secondly they try and sell the books directly, and they're linked, of course, those two. But you have to sell your books beyond your mailing list to make a profit.

The app, I'm thinking, is probably better at the second one than the first one, because if you're downloading the app you are probably on the mailing list. You're familiar with the author.

Not necessarily, because it's another link at the back of the Kindle ebook, whatever, to press the button and get sent to the App Store.
But by and large, this is another way of that conversion, that key conversion at launch time, pop up notification on the handheld device of every single person on your mailing list who's got the app to say, bing. It's available.
Stuart Grant: Yeah. That's it. It's that immediacy. It's about the ease of it. I open that push notification and it takes me to the page that I've been directed to. So it could be the Amazon site, or whatever it is, or wherever you want me to go, it will take me directly there.
So again, it's just cutting the steps, and you talked a lot in the podcast about steps and trying to reduce those for users. And I think it's just about …
If I had a Lee Child app, for example, or a Mark Dawson app, and I'd got the notification to say the new book's out, brilliant.
Press the button, download the app, download the book. And I think that's kind of where it's going to go. It's going to be about that swiftness and that ease.

James BLatch: Yeah. We want people to be ahead of the game. But listening to this podcast puts you ahead of thousands and thousands of self published authors who haven't taken the sort of steps that you are taking as a listener, and this is another one hopefully that will give people the edge. And it might feel a little bit alien to people at the moment but believe me, I think this is going to be, as I say, in 10 years, very normal.

Stuart Grant: It is. I mean, the great thing about apps are that they level the playing field. So you look at the App Store and you've got the big boys on there, Costa Coffee, Tesco, whoever.

But for an author to be on that platform puts them in that kind of field and that range. If Lee Child had an app, then for James Blatch to have an app, suddenly you're on the same leveling field as him.

I think that's really important, and that's why I set the company up, really, was to try and level the playing field for smaller companies and put them in a place where they would be found alongside all the big boys.

James BLatch: Yeah. I think Lee Child is, from what I can tell, a very traditional, traditional published guy, so he doesn't do a lot of this stuff. Stuart Grant: Probably a bad example, actually.

James BLatch: But no. But just saying that you would instantly have the app and have that connection, so let's do that whilst other people don't. How complicated is this to do?

What are the steps an author needs to take to end up A, with the app in the first place and B, managing it afterwards? How technical?

Stuart Grant: It's something you probably wouldn't want to do if you didn't know what you were doing. There are different stages of apps and levels of apps.

If you pay for a bespoke app, it can cost anything from 15 to 80,000 pounds. And some of the apps that you might consume at the moment, Facebook or whatever, they've been hundreds of thousands of pounds to develop.

What we try and do is create apps that are much, much less costly and that's because they're built on a template system. Essentially like WordPress, for those of the people that are familiar with that.

So there are limitations to it, but it will do everything you can imagine it to. It's not like you need it to count how many times you jump up and down on a trampoline or something bizarre. It's a very specific, functional app. In terms of cost-wise, you can build apps yourself. There are platforms where you can do that. But there are downsides to that. You have to register as an Apple developer and a Google developer and all the rest of it, and most people won't want to do all of that.

We've tried to create a product where people can pay a nominal amount, really, and have the facility of an app. And if it's something they use and it develops massively, then obviously they can pay the extra and get a bespoke coded app, which is what we're finding with some of the businesses that we've done apps for.

In terms of authors, it's about whether they want one, it's about understanding the possibilities of it, getting their heads around how they can use it and being actively involved in kind of keeping the content up-to-date.
I mean, the great thing is you can point it to lots of stuff on the web, so it automatically updates. You don't actually have to do an awful lot of work within it.

James BLatch: So it would be, I guess, equivalent to getting a new website. You'd work with the developer or somebody's going to build it for you.

You'd help design, and at some point they'd probably hand it over to you or you would hand over to a third party to do some maintenance stuff. But you've taken us through our SPF app this morning, and actually the back end, as you call it, the back end isn't back endy at all. It's very user friendly, pretty intuitive.

Sending push notifications could not be easier, and some lovely little tricks in there like the geolocated push notifications. So you set up like a two mile radius if people enter an event that you're at it pops up on their phone, but it doesn't pop up to anybody else in the world, just people that are there near you.

I was amazed at how easy that is. I think this is very much within the grasp of people who are, let's say, people who've listened to some of the podcasts and established themselves on Facebook and started a mailing list, you are able to run an app. It doesn't take much more than that.

Stuart Grant: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah.

When you have a community already, there will be an interest in whatever you're doing. And you've probably seen that with Mark and the SPF community that you say you've got something available and suddenly you've got thousands of people coming and finding it.

I think the same is true of an app. I wouldn't recommend it's probably something that people in the very start of their career need right now. Obviously if people want one then it's available in all kinds of ways, but for somebody that's properly established, has a good fan base, and wants to communicate to their readers quickly and effectively, it would be something I would recommend that people think about at least.

James BLatch: You skirted around the whole cost issue a little bit. You talked about it being nominal, quite cheap. I don't have to put you on the

spot here, you probably haven't even looked forward enough to actually come up with a figure, but what's this comparable with?

Is it comparable with the cost of getting a website or is it less than that?

Stuart Grant: It's probably comparable with a website, yeah. If you were to allocate somewhere between, I don't know, 800 and 1,000 pounds potentially, that's where you'd be looking at, which obviously is much less than a bespoke coded app.

I haven't really formulated an entire pricing structure at this stage, but it would be somewhere in that region. Hundreds of pounds rather than thousands, for sure.

People spend that kind of money on all kinds of marketing tools. So it's just another application, and it's probably the most powerful marketing tool you can have.

James BLatch: Okay. And we say this is sort of developmental from you. As you say, you haven't structure a pricing setup yet, but that will come in the future.

In the immediate future, you're looking for a couple of volunteers.

Stuart Grant: What I'd really like to do is have a competition running with yourselves whereby people can apply and say that as I said, it's probably better for people that do have a fan base and a number of books out. And then we will award somebody that app and we'll build an app around their brand, pulling in all of their content and showing them how to use it, and then seeing how they get on. That would be a fantastic opportunity for somebody, and we'd love to do.

James BLatch: Right. Okay. Well, we'll send out a push notification, obviously, which will link to a landing page. But if you would like, if you've got, what should we say?

Because you do need authors who are established here. We can't have somebody brand new hasn't got a book out yet. I think this is going to work for somebody that's got perhaps at least three books out, do you think?

Stuart Grant: Yeah. I would think somebody that's got a fan base, that's got some books out that they want to try this and it would be a great case study for all of us. Please get in touch.

James BLatch: I'll give out the URL now. So the offer is that Stuart will build an app for you with your branding, teach you how to then take it over and send push notifications or automate those systems and so on.

And then you feed back to Stuart and, hopefully share on our Facebook group how you've got on with the app, whether it's worked for you, whether you see potential in it, et cetera. So perhaps two people, and if you go to selfpublishingformula.com/authorapp, all one word, a-u-t-h-o-r-a-p-p. Selfpublishingformula.com/authorapp. Jot your email address in there and we'll probably then email you all and just get a little word … I don't know how we're … I'm obviously finding my way here. I think basically as long as you've got at least three books out, that's fine.

Stuart Grant: Yeah.

James BLatch: And then we'll get in touch. We'll select two people from that randomly. If it turns out when we contact you you haven't yet published your first book, we'll go on to the next person, but at least three books out and that's a way of getting a free app and you can be a pioneer.

Stuart Grant: It's an exciting time. I really do truly believe that we are where we were 10 years ago with websites and everybody was like, "Oh, I need a website."

And now we're at the point where everybody knows about apps, they don't necessarily know how they use them but they know that everybody's getting them, if you like, and we've seen every big brand in the world create apps for their products.

It's time that this community saw some of that action, and this is a good time to be doing it. It's not at the beginning of the industry, but it's certainly the best time to be getting in there.

James BLatch: Well, we can say that we had that conversation on the way here as we walked through Cambridge. It's genuinely exciting to be in the self publishing space at the moment.

And it will be for years, yes. There's not suddenly going to be a point next year where it's a well-trodden path and there are big companies that set you all up and do it. It is a bunch of privateers.

SPF is part of that, Jo Penn, others around the world who help you out and empower you to do it. It will look different in a decade, but at the moment we are pirates on the sea, in a good sense.

Stuart Grant: Absolutely. I mean, I signed up to Mark's course in October last year when you launched the 101 course originally, and I still am blown away by the content in there.

And to be part of the community, I'm in the Facebook group most days. It's just a fantastic time to be in it, and I obviously am passionate about what I do, both kind of camps and want to see if the apps work. I know they will, but it would be great to apply both parts into this time, because I think it's a great time to do it.

James BLatch: Great. Stuart, thank you very much indeed for joining us. It's not been too much of a chore, has it, sitting in 90 degree heat in Cambridge? It's been lovely. Nice cool breeze is what I hope is not interfering too much.

So just a reminder that if you would like an app built for you for free in return for a little bit of feedback to Stuart about how it's worked for you, you need to have published at least three books, and I guess that could be traditional published or indy published, it doesn't matter, just somebody who's an established author, effectively.

You don't need to be a world-famous big name. Literally, you need to have a few books out there and you have a mailing list and you think that people will likely go for the app.

Just drop in your email address at selfpublishingformula.com/authorapp. And, of course, please download the SPF app. Go to the App Store, the Android store, is it called an Android store?

Stuart Grant: Google Play Store.

James BLatch: Google Play Store. Is that what it's called?

Stuart Grant: Yeah.

James BLatch: Okay. And wherever else.

Stuart Grant: And the iTunes Apple store, and just search for Mark Dawson Self Publishing Formula or SPF, Self Publishing Formula, and it should arrive. But there'll be links as well all over Facebook and within mailing lists and stuff, I'm sure. So if you can't find it, which I'm sure you will be able to, there will be other places to find it.

James BLatch: Yeah. We'll stick the link out if you … And within a couple of weeks, if you're anything like me, you will only listen to the podcast on your phone via the app, because it's just a convenient place. It pops up and there it is. You press a button and you're listening to it.

Stuart Grant: Absolutely. I mean, I listen to the podcast religiously every week, and I always listen to it via the app, because it's such an easy way to do it. Open the app, press podcast, go. Done.

James BLatch: Brilliant. Thank you very much indeed, Stuart.

Stuart Grant: Thank you.

James BLatch: Must get that photograph done now, and then maybe an ice cream.

Stuart Grant: Absolutely. You're buying.

James BLatch: Stuart is an advocate of the app, and he's not the only one. He sees the App Store as where we're all going to be in a few years' time, but at the moment it's a bit of untested and untried territory for most people.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely. I was reasonably skeptical about this. I'm a reasonably early adopter of new tech, but I try not to be too early. I did initially feel that this was a little bit too soon to be looking into something like this. But the more I've looked at the SPF app, and we've had some good feedback from people who found it without us telling them that it was there, I've come around to the view that this is something that is actually quite interesting.

Any kind of new ways that you can find to reach your readers, or in our case our listeners, is a really good thing.

And just in the same way that I'm deep in the lab experimenting with Facebook Messenger ads and messenger bots at the moment, I'm very excited about that, I think apps and things like that could also form a useful part of a writer's arsenal in reaching out and finding new readers and then continuing that relationship that I'm always stressing between the writer and the reader, turning them from customers to readers to fans and eventually to friends and ambassadors.

I think this is a really good, interesting area, and Stuart has been very generous with regards to what he's prepared to do for a couple of our listeners.

James BLatch: Yes. He has. So just to reiterate the offer that we talked about on the interview. If you've got at least three books out and you have a mailing list, and you're in touch with your readers as it stands at the moment, then you are definitely a candidate to be a beta and get a free app from Stuart.

He'll create that for you. So if you just pop along to selfpublishingformula.com/authorapp, all one word, a-u-t-h-o-r-a-p-p, authorapp. Pop in your email address there and we will select a couple of people randomly, as long as you qualify, as long as you've got three books out and you've got a mailing list.

And this is exciting. I think the more interactive you are with your readers, we know from the other media that are around, the forms, that the better it is. We probably could go too far on that front, but you certainly think … We talked a lot about having a relationship with readers that's so far away from the old traditional author who perhaps sat behind a desk once every two years in a bookshop. And the app is very much an extension of that relationship, I think.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely, yeah. It makes, it's just another way to reach out. And you can do fun things with that as well. We've looked at things like

geographical tagging. So if we were to have an event, at London Book Fair for example, people who turned up there would be a geofence and as they cross that fence their app would ping them to tell them where we are, for example.

Or inversely, if you're at home and your app pinged, it might mean that John Dyer is on your phone monitoring your house, in which case it's time to lock the doors.

James BLatch: Well, he'd be in breach of many laws-

Mark Dawson: He would.

James BLatch: … if he came within five miles of me.

Mark Dawson: It could automatically ring the police. Anyway, we should stop being nasty to John. We do get emails from, well at least one listener. One person.

James BLatch: One person's concerned that it's a bullying mentality within the company.

Mark Dawson: Because we all went to public school. So this is … We didn't go to public school.

James BLatch: We didn't.

Mark Dawson: Yes.

James BLatch: I did one year at public school. Did you go to public school? Public school by the way, in the UK, means the opposite of what it sounds like.

Mark Dawson: Yes. Exactly. Yes.

James BLatch: It means private school.

Mark Dawson: Yes.

James BLatch: You went to state school, John.

Mark Dawson: He's looking at John.

John Dyer: I had a scholarship to a public school.

James Blatch: John is public school. He's the-

Mark Dawson: Oh my goodness.

James BLatch: He's the toff amongst us.

Mark Dawson: He is.

John: I had a scholarship.

Mark Dawson: You had a … Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

James Blatch: And my mother was a baroness. That doesn't make me a toff.

John : Yeah. You're definitely a toff.

James BLatch: Wish it did. Anyway. Just mention again that we've got a range of books available for listeners, which will help you in your writing and authoring career, particularly marketing career.

One of the ones I think is of most interest to people if you're listening to this podcast and you get value from these podcasts, there are lots of them in the back catalog.

You can go through, pick out the ones you want to listen to of course on iTunes, wherever it is you pick up the podcast, but we've created a handy-to-digest book with transcripts of all the best interviews.

And you can search that as well, because it could be very useful for you if you're going through particular phases of your marketing, you want to look up what we've discussed in the past on that subject. And if you go to selfpublishingformula.com/vault, v-a-u-l-t, you can get that book for the princely sum of nothing. Absolutely free.

Mark Dawson: Yes. And we'll have others as well.

At the moment we have a book on Amazon ads marketing. We also will have a Facebook ads book, we will have two books on editing, so a book on how to write a page-turner from an editorial perspective, and also a book on how to work with editors.

So, plenty there and more coming as well.

Also the SPF directory with a vetted list of professionals that you can use, editors, copywriters, artists, that kind of stuff. Plenty of value there and, yeah, none of those cost anything, so our gift to the community.

James BLatch: Yeah. Absolutely. Go to selfpublishingformula.com and you'll access to those books. And hopefully by the time this … I was going to say by the time this podcast goes out as I'm looking at the date, we might have a new website, do you think mid-July? No? Looking dodgy. The public schoolboy has said no. Maybe not.

Mark Dawson: We'll come back to you on that.

James BLatch: We'll get back to you on that. It's in possibly August. Okay. We've got a new website. Exciting, brilliant-looking new website. But a reason to listen next week is that we are talking to Brett Battles, who's actually probably a bit of a competitor of yours, I guess. A similar type of-

Mark Dawson: He was a competitor.

James BLatch: He doesn't sound like a state-educated boy. He sounds like he's got that Club sort of mentality. Okay. So Brett's next week, and I can't wait to talk to you then, and him as well. Goodbye.

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