

PODCAST 9: BOOK PROMOTIONS THAT WORK! – WITH RICCI WOLMAN FROM WRITTEN WORD MEDIA

James Blatch: Hello. Mark and I are back. We had a blast at the London book fair and I hope that you enjoy those two episodes that we filmed in around and about. To give you kind of author eye view of the LBF, it was fun, wasn't it Mark?

Mark Dawson: It was great fun. A quick pop quiz, when was the [inaudible 00:00:41] built?

James Blatch: We should actually set ... This is good question, when it was 1886.

Mark Dawson: Correct.

James Blatch: What have I won?

Mark Dawson: You've won, I don't know, dinner with me. Second place is [two beers 00:00:53] with me.

James Blatch: Yeah, exactly. The opportunity to sell slightly less unprepared and we did started talking about the history of the building. It was my fault. Okay. We're sort of back to normal for this podcast. We're going to be a hearing from a very important person in the self publishing sphere. This is Ricci Wolman. I'm going to introduce her properly in a moment. We get talking to her. It's suffice to say Ricci is all about visibilities, all about you being noticed and getting your books noticed, getting your head above the frame. This is something that's going to be very much on your plate. Mark is next because you're got a launch coming up.

Mark Dawson: Yes. I'm just coming through the end of the last kind of edit, the [LD1 00:01:36] on the [inaudible 00:01:37], a book which is called The Jungle and the launch they face is going to be the 20th of May. What I will do as we run up to that is I'll record some snippets that go into everything on my launch sequence, so sending out to editorial getting comments back. Then it's the pre-team getting comments back. Then the precise sequence that I use to launch and I'll talk about how well it does. I'm going to have a go again onto one of the best seller list this time. That would be a really interesting episode that I suspect will be out around about the end of May. Yeah, it's all about visibility and that's something that Ricci knows lots and lots about.

James Blatch: It is but that sounds like a great thing. I'm looking forward to that as well from my own point of view when that comes up. Let's get into this interview with our friend in a moment. Okay. We're delighted to welcome Ricci Wolman to the SPF podcast. You're well known amongst the community but let me just introduce her anyway. Founder and CEO of Written Word media. Of course she held MBA from Harvard no less and Ricci incubated free [Book Seat 00:02:57], Written Word Media's first web property within their online marketing agency. Ricci has over 10 years experience built in audiences online using data driven customer acquisition techniques. Just a quick word on Written Word Media because it's an impressive set of status served with 18,000 office, many of whom are self published but also works with 3 of the big 5 major publishers as well as a long list of smaller publishers and publicist on book promotions. Written Word Media has a combined audience of over 700,000 readers of which over 400,000 receive email, book recommendations based on their genre and device preferences. It's a powerful platform and she's a powerful woman. Hello, Ricci.

Ricci Wolman: Hi, James, Thanks for having me. We're delighted to have you along, Ricci. Now, I'm going to let Mark kick off because I know you are a bit of a fan, Mark, aren't you?

Mark Dawson: I am, yeah. There's a good story. I told this Ricci this before. When I started self publishing 3 or 4 years, ago, the first major indication that I might be on something was when I did a KDB select kind of free weekend, we're using those 5 days there Amazon [give to you 00:04:06]. I don't know where I found out about Freebooksy. I guess I [looked into 00:04:10] into it a bit but I booked a promotion for the book I was promoting at the time. It was that August, I think kind of [harvest time 00:04:18]. I got to actually ride on my bike. I live at that [inaudible 00:04:21] in the country side and out in the farmer's fields and he was harvesting the crop. I just decided to sit down and check the status.

I got my phone out. Miraculously, I had a signal and pulled it out, and found out that I had about 40 or 50 thousand give aways just in 2 or 3 days. The main reason for that was because I booked that Freebooksy promotion. That was a real life moment for me that I could leave [Ridge there 00:04:47], the combination of Amazon's promotion and backing up with an email blast from a company like Freebooksy and to get my book into the hands of people that never heard of me before. I think that was the kind of the tipping point for me to actually start taking things seriously. I've always had a really, really soft spot for Freebooksy. It's one of my favorite promotional venues.

Ricci Wolman: I love that story, Mark. It makes us really happy on this end to be have been able to help in some small way in you launching this amazing career that you now

have as with a writer and as somebody who's helping so many other authors out there who want to do the same thing.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, thanks.

James Blatch: Ricci, how did this start for you? How did the publishing aspect of your work start?

Ricci Wolman: As you mentioned briefly, James, in the intro, my background is really in online marketing and audience building, not really in publishing per se. I had a consulting agency where I'd work with a lot of clients. I'd also worked with some major brands like The Body Shop which is actually a UK-based company that's international and done a lot of work for them. While I was consulting to my clients, I've been doing this for a little while. My mom was in the midst of publishing a book. She's self publishing it herself, very niche of kind of religious fiction genre. She had found out about Amazon's 3 days with KDP Select and had decided to give that a shot. In so doing, she set her book free as many authors do. I think she set it free for 3 days and she barely got any downloads and she was really disappointed by this and we were having a chat by phone and she was telling me about her experience and I was pretty surprised that her book being free had not gotten more attraction. I started doing some research for her and realized that although 3 days on KDP can be very powerful, the issue of discovery is almost the same as having your book priced. If you go to Amazon at the time where when I checked it for her, over 5,000 books that were free. Her book was just having a really hard time surfacing itself to readers.

In trying to correct this problem for her, I decided, well, what I started a blog. I called it Freebooksy [really then 00:07:11] then I called it that because of search engine optimization. I wanted to show up for terms like free books. What if I put her book and selected a few other books from Amazon network free on this blog, and with that help her move more copies next time she did a KDP 3 day. Lo and behold, it did the next time she ran a promotion, she was able to download hundreds of books again, niche genres. She wasn't really looking at the thousands of downloads like somebody like Mark or someone who's writing one of the head genre's what we'd see back then, and Freebooksy was born.

It was really a side project for me for quite a while for the first two years. I was still focusing mainly on the consulting. What I was doing is I was using Freebooksy as a test bed for my clients. If Facebook came out with a new ad product, I would test that on Freebooksy. When [inaudible 00:08:05] rolls out, I would set up an account for Freebooksy. It enable me to be really smart with my clients because I was able to test all

of these on my own home grown site. The side effect was that I started growing a really large audience because I was spending time, resources and investing marketing dollars on the site.

Authors started approaching me and asking me if they could pay to be featured on Freebooksy and it started to take off as a business in its own right. For the past two years now, almost that has been my sole focus. I have shut down my consulting business and Written Word Media is ready to pair on company of Freebooksy and the 3 other sites that we have. My story like a story of many self published authors was that of kind of figuring it out in the beginning and I still had a full time job that wasn't my focus. Today, I'm really living the dream of being able to work for myself and do this full time. It's been an incredible ride.

Mark Dawson: Do you think that it's something to be ... You say 5,000 free books at the time that your mom's book came out. That's 3 or 4 years ago. Then, I wonder what the number is now. I don't actually know what it is but it must be at least 4 or 5 times that.

Ricci Wolman: Yeah. I would think so. I haven't checked it in a little while but I know the last time I did check where in which was last year or sometime, it was over 12,000 free books when I was searching for something. The number is growing exponentially. This issue of discovery is becoming more and more [encorement 00:09:35].

Mark Dawson: Yeah. As I remember really vividly, the first time I did the 3 days, this was before I wised up and used Freebooksy to give me a hand. It was really disappointing because I've been led to believe that kind of a free option was this golden bullet that everyone would see the book and download it and that would be the start of a wonderful career. Of course, that isn't what happens because there are so many free books. It's so difficult to get any visibility. That's the main question. It's still the main question today is how do you come through the noise? How do you go through the noise and find your readers. Yeah, it even reminded me that it was one of the main things that bothers me when I started doing this. It still just is what have been right now.

Ricci Wolman: Absolutely, yeah. Free is a very powerful tool because it does help you with that initial adoption and conversion rates on free are a whole lot higher than conversion rates on paid. At the end of the day, whether it's free or priced, whatever product it is, you still have to market it. It's the same across industry really if you look at apps as an example. iPhone apps or android apps, there are hundreds of thousands that are free and they're also trying to market and get people to download them. We're living in a very interesting time where consumers want things for free and there are so

many free things out there but it's how do you actually find the consumers to "purchase" your product.

Mark Dawson: My point of view, Ricci, if somebody is starting up in this area, it can sometimes sound a little bit despondent when you hear the figures of how many people are giving away their books. I still suspect and I'm sure I have view on this that the percentage of all those who are prepared to take that extra step, to understand the marketing, to understand the push, to understand the coordination effort that needs to go around marketing their book is still quite small.

Ricci Wolman: The numbers may sound discouraging but if you take a step back and you look at the picture as a whole and how in the authors are doing and how many authors are making money from their craft of writing for the first time ever, that is growing as well. To your point, James, if you take the time to understand some of the simple things that you can do in the beginning, it's not overwhelming and the chance of success I think is actually very high. [inaudible 00:11:50] are accounting for almost, what, 45% of the ebook market share on Amazon. Okay. That's almost half. It's pretty incredible. When you look at the trend 2 years ago, I think [units 00:12:04] was sitting around 27%. In the space of the last 2 years, maybe next year, indies will have doubled their market share.

Yes, there are a lot of free books out there. Yes, there are a lot of people who are self publishing but consumers are actually starting to trade their purchasing power in and instead of buying only traditionally published books, they're buying a lot of indie published books as well. I think that's really cool.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, maybe it's going to cause clever indies are making it more and more difficult to tell the difference between a traditionally published book and an indie published book. You know, James' point that there aren't that many authors that are [proprietors 00:12:41] to switch on to the marketing side. I think that is true. That's an opportunity for the ones that are. People listening to a podcast like this and learning how to use services like Freebooksy and immediately elevating themselves above most of the competition which is the [inaudible 00:12:57] opportunities to make a positive impact instead.

Ricci Wolman: Yeah, absolutely. I think the vast majority of authors out there think that the work comes in writing the book which is not untrue. It is very, very difficult to write a book. It is something that I cannot do and the fact that somebody can do it is great. When it comes to self publishing, writing a book is maybe 30% or 40% of the work. Once you finish the book, there's a whole lot to do from the editing, proofing, getting

the right cover design, publishing it and then all the way through the marketing. A lot of the books that are sitting out there when you do your searches and you look at this up, publishing stats, a lot of that are authors who are saying, "Hey, I've written my book. They put it out there," and then they haven't taken the next step to do the last, run the rest of the race.

If you take the time to do some of those things, that's where you really start joining this community of indie authors who are thriving and who are making money from their craft and who are doing very well.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. That's where we want to be. Ricci, let's stroll down a little bit in some of the detail and talk specifically about mailing list. Can you give us some entry level tips, sort of with on building and keeping a main list engaged?

Ricci Wolman: For authors who are just getting started, the very first thing I would say is start building your own personal mailing list right away. You can start doing this even before you have published your book. There are lots of great services and tools out there. My recommendation would be MailChimp. That's what we use and we've been really happy with the service. It's also free up through 2,000 subscribers. You simple go to MailChimp. You would set up an account and you create an email list called whatever your name is. [Sign the author 00:14:47]. Ricci Wolman's mailing list. I would say Ricci Wolman's mailing list. You Slowly start adding readers to that list. The easy, the low hanging fruit is obviously friends and family.

You would send out an email to your friends and family and say, hey, I'm in the process of writing a book. Would you like me to keep you updated on how it's going and let you know when it's published? If so, please click this link and join my mailing list. That way, you can probably get your first 50 to 1000 sign ups depending on how popular you are. Co-workers, right, if you still have a day job, email your co-workers. Let them what you're doing.

James Blatch: I can still remember receiving Mark's first emails. I'm still getting the emails.

Ricci Wolman: Right, and you're still buying his books.

James Blatch: Exactly, yeah.

Ricci Wolman: You got to start somewhere. I would say start there because it's a very thrilling feeling the first time that if somebody signs up for your mailing list and then

when you start logging into your list or you get an email from MailChimp everyday that says you have a new subscriber to your list. This is a marathon. It's not a race. You're not looking to build a mailing list like we have over the course of a few months. It's going to take a long time but the secret to success here is just to be doing it all the time because it adds up. If you're adding a couple people everyday over the course of a year, all of a sudden, you actually have a mailing list that could be close to a thousand people. Take the first step. Set up your mailing list and start asking people to join in. Then if you have a website, you would have a little sign up link on your website so the people who are coming to your website can sign up for your mailing list as well. Once your book is published, at the very end of the book in the back matter portion when somebody has finished reading the book, you would say, "Did you enjoy this book? Sign up for my mailing list and I'll let you know when I have additional titles that are being published." All those things working together will allow you to slowly start building your list. Those are just organic ways to go about doing it. Once you start getting a little more sophisticated and you have some marketing dollars, there are other ways to build your list like through Facebook ads, markers and incredible course that will walk you through exactly how to do this. I would recommend that as well. Then, it's all about engaging the people on your list. I would say rule number one, don't spam people. Nobody likes that. You don't like it, so don't do it to anybody else. I would say set up a schedule and say, hey, I'm going to email my list once a month. I think that's enough if you're an author and it's enough to keep people engaged but not so much the people are going to start unsubscribing.

Then every month, just think about what you want to tell people about. If you're got a book that you say your book is about to be published, then you would email that list and you would say to them, "Hey, my book's coming out on Tuesday. I would love your support. Would you please go and purchase the book on Amazon," and include a link for them. If you're still in the process of writing the book, you could just send an email once a month and say, "Hey, this is my status update. I'm half way through the book or I'm stuck on chapter 3, or I've had a lot of writer's block, or I'm almost done but I'm struggling with this issue." People are really interested in the writing process, especially those of us who cannot write. We have to read about authors and how you're creating this book and how you're writing it and the challenges and triumphs along the way. I don't think it has to be complex. It just has to be genuine and people will find that interesting. They might even forward it onto other people who will then join your mailing lists. All of these things kind of feed into each other, to slowly grow and build your own audience.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. They will now remember really vividly of getting the first email from [inaudible 00:18:27] that wasn't from someone that I knew. It's saying that, hey,

another I've got a ... Someone who's just [dropped 00:18:33] in your mail list. That was an amazing thing actually. It's good to remember that because it's not like that these days. I get a lot, actually a lot more than in a couple coming [inaudible 00:18:43] that instance, many more than that now. It's good to remember that every time you get their email from MailChimp, that's another reader who has decided that they like your stuff enough to just give you something that's quite personal to them and that their email address. Yeah, it's good to hear that because I sometimes get a bit [lazy 00:18:59] about that and went for months without being able to make this work.

Ricci Wolman: Yeah, absolutely. I mean we all started from zero. Freebooksy had a mailing list of zero 5 years ago. Mark had a mailing list of zero. James, I don't know what your mailing list is today but [crosstalk 00:19:16].

James Blatch: Guess. Your prediction [crosstalk 00:19:18].

Ricci Wolman: Maybe you do have a mailing list of zero right now but we all started there and it's really ... I would just say have fun with it. It's a really fun process and it is thrilling to start getting those emails and see people signing up who are not friends and family, who are just interested in you and your work. It's pretty awesome.

James Blatch: Yeah, that's great. I think the engagement is something of an art form for you, Ricci, and it's great to hear you talking about particularly like the line about it doesn't have to be complex. It just does have to be genuine. I think getting that voice right is very important. I think Mark does that very well actually. I'll even say that [inaudible 00:19:51] and his emails. I think getting that voice, that friendly informative but not over bearing works well.

Ricci Wolman: Yeah, exactly. I mean just you know, you write the emails if you were talking to a friend or somebody from high school you haven't seen for a while. You're just really filling them in on what you're doing on the author or writing side of your life. People will find that interesting. I think sometimes author's discounts, how incredible their skill and their craft is and especially when you hang out with a lot of other authors, you kind of assume, oh, this is something anybody can do and there's maybe not as much kind of bragging rights around writing as I feel like there should be.

James Blatch: That's because [we're all massively 00:20:32] insecure.

Ricci Wolman: With authors, I hear a lot, they say, "Well, I've got nothing to email people about. What am I going to email them?" There are plenty of things. Just talk to people about what's it's like to be a writer, what is your day look like? How are you

juggling writing and having a full time job? How are you picking the title for your book? How are you naming your characters? How do you choose your setting? All of these things are really, really interesting and people much enjoy hearing about it through your email newsletter.

James Blatch: Great. Okay. Well, should we move onto some tricks and tools of the trade. I mean there's quite a range of promotional tools available today. Some is free advice. Some are quite expensive to sign into. That particular promotional tools, Ricci, that you see is effective.

Ricci Wolman: Well, you know, we spoken a lot about email marketing. I don't want to be the dead horse here. I will say I believe the email marketing is still the most effective marketing tool that is out there. You're going to be building your own list. You continue to do that and then the other way that people use email marketing is that they basically rent lists which is what our service does. It's what services like BookBub does. BookBub, as we build really huge audiences and readers and you basically pay to get in front of that reader audience. It's the quickest most effective way to get your book in front of readers and boost your downloads and boost your sales. We can talk about that a little bit more later on.

The other effective tools I've seen out there are ... I don't want to [glance 00:22:09] over promotional days. I'm kind of assuming here that everyone knows what I mean when I say if you're going to rent a list. The very first step there is actually to have a calendar and set up a promotional day. You're going to set your book to free for a couple of days or maybe you're going to discount your book to 99 cents or even to 2.99 depending on what you're strategy is. Taking a very planned approach to these promotional days is going to set you up for success. You kind of look out at the next 6 months. I'm not sure, Mark, if you do it in 6 months increments or you look at a whole year down the road. Look at the title or titles that you have and then pick days on the calendar of where you're going to discounts the book or around a promotional day. The reason that promotional days are so effective is two fold. One is that you're discounting or you're making your book free so it really is a discount and your readers and people out there are going to respond to that. The second is that when you actually mark that day on the calendar and you say I'm going to do a promotional day, it forces you to really focus all of your attention on marketing for those 48 to 72 hours.

You say you're going to send out an email and you know you're going to tweet and you're going to ask people for support and maybe you're going to buy slots in lists like ours. As an author, it makes you 100% focused on marketing for a couple days every month. The result is that you will see sales and you will see success. When you focus on

marketing, it will work. The challenge is how do you get yourself to focus on marketing. Setting up those promotional days is kind of the first step in all of these.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. It's important to [inaudible 00:23:55] and to answer the question, I'm very lazy on promotion just because I know this is one of the things, my objectives for this year is stop being so bloody lazy about. I've got so many books now that just kind of looking at the calendar and forcing myself to stop writing and to stop planning promotion is something that gets from the background of it too much. That is just lazy on my part because I know that if say I had a deal with the 99 cents on one of my books then I get a bargain books needs placement, getting with [Bookbub 00:24:26]. You put them in as well and maybe you layer in some other promotion and send an email to your list. Provide you time that right, you can propel the book higher up, up the Amazon rankings which means more visibility which means more sales, which means more visibility, all that kind of stuff.

I know that works and that was something I did really diligently when I was starting to push this a bit in 2013 and 2014. I've got lazy now. I think one thing I want to say [coming 00:24:51] from this conversation is stop being so lazy. Get it sorted out.

Ricci Wolman: Yeah. I mean I think it's Jackie [Weeger 00:24:58]. I think she [writes novel 00:24:59] authors and I read a quote on her blog recently that said, "When I promote my book, I sell more copies." It's the most simple statement.

James Blatch: [crosstalk 00:25:08].

Ricci Wolman: It's 100% true. If you take the time to sit and promote your book, you will sell more copies. That's what I like promo days because it really forces you to sit down and focus only on promoting your book.

Mark Dawson: Say, I have 3 books for bargain, books information coming out, what would you recommend as the things I should do to make that promotion as successful as possible?

Ricci Wolman: Sure. You did mention BookBub. BookBub is a great service. They have the largest list by far out there out of all these sites. If you can get a BookBub, I would do that too. Many of our authors, if they get a BookBub, they will purchase a bargain books in Freebooksy as well because kind of the ones you punch off having visibility on both our site and their site guarantees that you're going to shoot up to probably somewhere within the top 20 or top 50 on the Amazon charts depending on your genre. Definitely try for a BookBub, schedule a feature with us. We do not have the same strip editorial

criteria as BookBub does mainly because we were born out of my mom's book which was it's really hard to get their first promotion. It's really hard to get those first reviews. We don't feel that we should be only picking the authors who've already made it. If you can't get in BookBub, don't worry. You can still get a feature with us. Schedule your features with your paid services, your rental lists. Then, make sure to send out an email to your list as well. If you're active on Twitter or Facebook, now is the time to, on the days of the promotion, to tweet and make sure that you're going to post to Facebook about your book being discounted or free. If you've started dabbling with ads, I would even recommend boosting those posts which is basically putting some pay dollars behind Facebook and Twitter to get some further amplification so your book gets in front of even more people.

Then, asking through your email list and through your Twitter followers, asking people to retweet you and to forward on the email. That's going to help you as well. The tipping point comes when you start climbing those Amazon charts and you start becoming visible in the top 100. What happens then is that people who are not on our list of book [published 00:27:29] or on Twitter or on Facebook but who just happens to be on Amazon that day surfing and looking for their next book to read, they will find your book because most consumers browse by searching the top charts. They're going to go the top 100 free Kindle books and they're going to page through and they're going to see your book, or they're going to go to the top 100 books in mystery and if you're sitting somewhere in the top 100 charts, chances are they're going to find you. That leads to as halo effect of even more downloads and more sales. Then, Amazon's algorithm sees all these activity around your book and it's now looking at who's purchasing your book and all their other activity and then they start recommending your book in that little section on the bottom that says people who purchase this also viewed this. All of these kind of feeds into this wave that keeps building and that's where you see your sales and downloads continue to generate days and weeks after the promotional days have ended.

Mark Dawson: That's when you start big screen caps, when you're sitting next to Stephen King for about 2 hours.

Ricci Wolman: Exactly. Another one of those thrilling things the first time it happens and now, Mark, you probably take it for granted.

Mark Dawson: [inaudible 00:28:47]. No, I'm joking. I'm joking.

James Blatch: Ricci, let me just ask you again. From a rookie point of view about ... I think most people ... Probably most people listening to this podcast will accept the idea

that starting out as an author, starting this, it's starting a business and you need to invest at the beginning and most businesses don't make money to start off with. You get a point where it's investment, a point where it's a break even and a point where it's profit if you're doing it right. Although lots of authors I don't think do accept that. They think they're going to start selling their first book, but let's put them to one side. I mean can you put figures on this for a rookie? Can you say to me how much you think I should be investing in that first book with the next one coming out soon with a view to being profitable in the future?

Ricci Wolman: Before I answer the question about the actual number, what I will say is the more books you have, the more money you will make. Being a first time author, you have multiple challenges. You have the challenge of getting your first book out there, getting reviews and getting sales and then you have the challenge of you're at a disadvantage because you only have one book. When somebody finishes your book, there is nothing else for them to go and purchase. Then if they haven't signed up for your email list, they kind of put the book down and then they forget about you and how are you going to get that person to come back and purchase your book the next time that you publish it.

I know for many authors, I think Russel Blake talks about this a lot. You don't really start making significant money until you have 2 or 3 or 4 titles that are out there because when you promote one title and people start reading that title, it leads to people purchasing the other titles in your portfolio per se. What I would probably recommend is when you publish that first book, you do a lot of the things we've talked about like starting to build your list and running a promotional day once every quarter. I would actually focus a lot of your attention on writing the next book which may sound a little counter intuitive. I think that is really the key to success, that you're going to be investing in the first book but you're investing in writing additional titles, so as you're building this list and as you're building a following, you actually have other things to settle to your readers.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. That other story I told of going and sitting down, taking my phone out when I've had the Freebooksy promotion, you mailed two things I hadn't got lined up is that I didn't have another book. All those 50,000 people maybe 10,000 would read the book, but there nowhere else then to go afterwards. Even more unforgiveably, I didn't have an email list. They couldn't even subscribe [to them 00:31:22] where I could tell them that I was working on the followup. When I look at that now, I was very naïve about that. I've done okay but I still kind of kick myself that I could perhaps have accelerated things by 6 months if I had taken things in a more professional fashion right from the start. That's great advice. [inaudible 00:31:42] at very, very least should have a

mailing list and that doesn't cost anything. You can get a free one with MailChimp box for 2,000 people.

Ricci Wolman: Yeah. To circle back to your original question was can I put some figures on this? I wouldn't be spending a whole ton of marketing dollars when you only have one title out there. I think you could away with budgeting maybe 100 or 200 dollars a quarter for your promotional days so that you're buying slots in rental lists. If you get a BookBub, that's a very different story. Getting a BookBub on the first book when you have no other titles is almost a little bit of a waste because you're not going to get any of the halo that you would normally see from that. I would say get your first title out. I think that should be a goal. Once it's out, start promoting it every quarter so that you can grow your views and you can grow your following and it will slowly grow your reader list but spend the rest of your time writing the next title.

Then, once you have two titles out, then you can start investing a little bit more because you also got to think about the return on your dollars. If you're spending a 100 dollars a quarter and you only have one book to sell, there's only X amount of revenue you can make. You can now spend that same 100 dollars but now there are two titles to sell, so your return on that investment is going to be higher and so it goes as you have more and more titles. Then once you're starting to be [ROI 00:33:07] positive then you up your marketing spend so that you're actually creating a business that is profitable as you're investing in it.

Mark Dawson: Another question that I've been thinking about for a little while is your in a really excellent position to answer this because with Freebooksy and bargain books you can even straddle both sides of the argument. You go on to forms these and people would be talking about the best way to promote and in particular the best price point and one of the arguments I see quite a lot is that free is over. Free is not as popular as it was say 5 years ago which might be true. People are starting to say that 99 cents is the new free. Instead of giving away books, you should put them to 99 cents because there's some kind of advantage there. Now, I'm not sure that I agree with that but you're in a particularly good place to comment on whether you see any trends in that.

Ricci Wolman: We're constantly looking at the click through rate and the number of downloads that are coming through from Freebooksy and the free books email only has free books in it. We're seeing growth in the number of free downloads. We're not seeing any kind of shrinkage there in terms of what readers want and then at the 99 cent, 99 cent price point is compelling to readers. The challenge there is that if you're not doing a Kindle countdown deal, you're only getting a 30% royalty share. The amount of money you're making up at 99 cent price point is so little that I think it's more

impactful to do free because you're going to get a lot more downloads and then you're going to see sell through on your other titles that you can then price at other price points.

If you only have one book, it's a slightly different story. If you have multiple titles, especially if you have a [series 00:34:43] selling the first book in the [series 00:34:44] to free or doing free promotional days, I think it's still very highly, highly effective marketing technique.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. Maybe the whole idea is make an impulse purchase completely frictionless and at zero, there is no price friction, so no one's going to think that I'd have to spend something. Even the 99 cents is a very small amount of money. It is still a spend. You are going to be [leasing 00:35:08] people. You are prepared to spend anything just kind of almost on an instinctive level. Whereas something that's free is much more likely just to be kind of clicked on and downloaded. Yeah, I'm [inaudible 00:35:20] and I'm not surprised that you see that from your data.

Ricci Wolman: Yeah. The click through rates on free versus paid, free is 45 times higher. There is to your point, free is free and free is very powerful and people will click through and download a free book without really thinking about it twice and 99 cents, you have to click that, pay with credit card and check your credit card [inaudible 00:35:46]. It gives people [polls 00:35:49] even though you would think it's less than a dollar, what's the difference but there is a big difference.

James Blatch: Okay, Ricci. [00:35:54] Before we let you go, I've been hogging you a bit on the rookie side of things. Can we move things on, for this last couple of questions, to authors with more experience, with more books who are making money. Perhaps they've got a full time job and it's good money but not enough for them to change their life. What's your advice to them? How do they take it to the next level?

Ricci Wolman: I think we've touched on a while a bit but I'm going to distill it for us here. Make sure that you continue to do your promotional days, Mark.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. Busted.

Ricci Wolman: For all those, and again, we run into this a lot, once you become somewhat successful, your income is kind of more stable and more consistent on a daily basis. We do see that authors tend to take their foot off the gas when it comes to setting up their promotional days and really putting their focus on marketing once a month or once every quarter. I would say try and get that discipline back and make sure that you

are still doing that if nothing else to make sure that you're spending some time on marketing which can fall by the way sides. Set your promotional days, focus on your marketing.

I would also say if you have a portfolio of titles and none of them are free, I would set one to be permanently free because free is very powerful and we know in [inaudible 00:37:17] shared the stat that if somebody reads your first book that's free, the sell through rate on your other titles are 45 to 55 percent. The lifetime value there to an author of giving away one book for free, if you have 5, 6, 7 other titles that are then going to be purchased is pretty high and I think it's absolutely worth doing once you get to that point.

The other thing I would say is get your book in all formats. Another take away from the author and newsreport was that indies are starting to take some share in print and audio book as well. Right now, it's not as marked as in the ebook sales. I do think that as more and more readers are purchasing their physical books online, indies are going to continue to take share. That's really exciting. If you really have a portfolio of titles, it's a fairly cheap way to amplify your revenue and see some growth without have to write a new book, just make sure your book is available in print. Then for your best sellers, get an audio book edition out.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, I completely agree with that. I mean the way I look at it is if I've written a book, that's the piece of intellectual property and I want to exploit every single iteration of that [IP 00:38:29]. The obvious one is selling an eBook than just to get it in print through through [great space 00:38:36] or mailing source or something like that. Audio is a big thing for me, I put all my books up in audible last year. Then even things like looking at film rights, foreign translation is quite a big one for me this year. Translate it, push on a bit and get some more rights sold around the world. I don't like [leaving my name 00:38:53] on the table and I don't like things left unexploited. All of those are really, really great suggestions for more experienced authors.

James Blatch: Great. Ricci, it's been fabulous listening to you. Value pack as I would say. What's next for you in Written Word Media?

Ricci Wolman: Well, you know. We're just going to continue doing what we do best which is building our audience. We have a really active reader audience that can help in these to sell more books. We're always experimenting with new products for if there is anything figuring out what's the most effective. That's my passion. I love marketing. I'm just going to continue to spend my time there and I would love to catch up with you guys down the road and we let you know if we come up with anything new and exciting.

James Blatch: Well, absolutely. You can guarantee it that we will remain firm friends. Ricci, it's been a great pleasure. Thank you so much for joining us.

Ricci Wolman: No, thanks for having me on.

James Blatch: Yeah. That was Ricci. It was really good talking to her. Ricci's a tenacious person and unusually perhaps for the type of person we interview, not an author herself, all about how to help authors and how to gain that feasibility. It's met her like a lot of people in the digital space, she does what she teaches if you like and she gets her own visibility in her own mailing list up and down to people's noses. Then she teaches us how to do that. Yeah, as we said right from the beginning and your little [anecdote 00:40:32], they're marked that this was an important moment for you when you use the services of Freebooksy. An important part of it.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. Freebooksy [created this 00:40:41]. It's certainly in the top tier of services that authors can go to to increase visibility and chances of being discovered. One thing we can try later and I was quite [assertive 00:40:51], we're going to have BookBub on as well in the next 4 or 5 weeks. Freebooksy on the one hand. BookBub on the other. BookBub is well known now and the space is being a massive [inaudible 00:41:02] when it comes to driving sales and downloads. We're going to have a chat with them coming up. If anyone has any questions that they'd like as to put to BookBub, then they can leave them in the comments for this show and we'll pick those up and we'll filter some and get a list of interesting questions so we can hopefully put [to them 00:41:20] that perhaps they haven't been asked before and you haven't heard the answers before. That can be cool.

James Blatch: Yeah. Exciting to have BookBub on. That's a really big beast to land which is sort of fishing and hunting metaphor all in one. You can tell I'm a writer. I should say just before we go that Mark and I have had some fun this week. We've been putting together our list of podcast episodes going up until ... Well, we'll be on the middle part of [the one 00:41:44] into July. We've got a list in front of us. Suffice to say there's going to be a continuation of really interesting guests. I think a couple of the standpoints authors at various stages of their career including quite early on. We've got one guy has had a real breakthrough this year. Another guy who had a bit of a breakthrough in terms of getting his mailing list working last year. We got and see some of the nitty gritty. Some of that will be just inspirational hearing from other authors who've cracked that aspect of it or get some tips and a lot of it will be the detail of how they've done that in some instructional stuff.

The other thing We're going to do, and this is really looking at the stats because we can now start to look at what podcast episodes are more popular than others that people have downloaded and something that became clear to us, Mark is that in the black and white stats is that people like the episode where you basically talked through the top tips, the 5 must directions for new authors. We didn't actually have an interviewee on for that I could say, but it made it clear that people do want value. They want to learn and they want to be able to grow their careers by listening to this podcast and others. We're going to do a couple of those, aren't we?

Mark Dawson: Yeah. We are and the first one we'll do is, or the answer to the question I got to ask most of all these days is what should I do of just starting over? My first, the main response there is just get a mailing list set up straight away. We'll talk about mainly this, about what you should do, what you shouldn't do, what services because you can look at whether you should get some simple, [inaudible 00:43:07], something more, complicated like infusion soft or active campaigns something like that. Just to kind of the pros and cons, the dos and don'ts that people should be bearing in my mind when they're setting up what will probably be their most valuable asset as an independent author.

James Blatch: That in fact will be the next podcast. We're going to call it something like, "It's the mailing list stupid," because it's a real one on one, isn't it for authors. Don't worry, we are going to start at the beginning. I'm going to be asking some basic questions of what is a mailing list, how do you actually go about setting it up, how do you actually go about growing it as well as some of those sort of if you like methods and approaches in general terms to why you should have it as an author. That would be our next one and we'll have a few more of those episodes that we'll start to fill up in the bank. Now, you can go back of course in iTunes or you're preferred provider and get all our episodes and listen to them. Some great quality stuff we've had already and a lot more to come.

Mark Dawson: Cool. I look forward to be back next week.

James Blatch: Indeed. Thank you very much to our guest Ricci Wolman and we will see you next time out.