

EPISODE 91: WHY I TURNED DOWN SEVEN FIGURES TO SELF PUBLISH – WITH HUGH HOWEY

Announcer: 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.

Here we are on another Friday. If you're a Friday listener. I don't know how many people are like live listeners. Grab it when it comes down on a Friday mark, or three or four months later, listening to this. Do we know that? We have stats on everything, right?

Mark Dawson: We've got stats all over the place. I don't know, really. It would be interesting to find that out, but that's one of the things about podcasting is that there's a bit of a time warp going on.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: I was talking about things that are happening next week. But if you're listening to this in the future, then-

James Blatch: You're in your silver suit with a flying car.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, exactly. Please email me back with the results from the 10:30 at Wincanton.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: That would be very helpful.

James Blatch: That's not very ambitious. How about the lottery numbers?

Mark Dawson: Oh, even better.

James Blatch: Euro millions. Let's go for that.

Good. Okay, look. Are we looking drawn and pale and pasty because we've been heads down getting the flagship course, the advertising for this course, ready to launch.

We're excited that this is going to be launching on Wednesday, the 8th of November, so it's just a few days off this podcast. It's first release.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. It won't be released again this year, and I don't think ... We haven't set the date yet, but it won't be released until the middle of next year. So if people are interested in getting onto the ads course, this is a good time to do it.

James Blatch: Yeah. As I said last week, we've just taught the States and interviewed a lot of our alumni from the first few releases, and it's been a very pleasing and uplifting thing. We've been dropping those interviews into the Facebook groups over the last few days. It was great to hear those stories.

Just before we move on to today's big interview. We have a big interview today. A big well-known person.

Before we move on to that, let's just quickly update people with what they can expect in this course.

We should say at the outset that if you are an existing student, you're enrolled in Advertising for Authors, you get everything that we add free of charge. That's just how it works.

We get a lot of questions at this time, this point in the site, of people saying to us, "I'm already enrolled. Do I get this for free?" So I sent an email out a couple of days ago, and if you noticed it.

And the whole purpose of this note was to say to people, "If you're already a student, you will get the new material for free." And the very first email I got back from it was, "I'm already a student. Will I get the new material for free?"

I had to copy and paste from the email below the very clear lines I said, "If you're already a student, you get the new material for free," but she was very apologetic and ...

Mark Dawson: Listeners. James is a very grumpy man.

James Blatch: But you know what? I'm not grumpy, really, but I think I probably am that person to other organizations. But when you're on the organizing side, you notice how human frailties work.

Mark Dawson: Just the irony of something that came in yesterday, actually.

James Blatch: What's that?

Mark Dawson: We had an email. We give away lots of free books, which we love to do. We've given away thousands of free books since we've been doing this. Someone emailed us back yesterday and said that she was interested in the book, but until she got to the point in the email where we

offered her the chance to grab the book. She said that turned her off and she wasn't interested.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: So I couldn't resist sending back a couple of variations on the theme with my thesaurus open, so-

James Blatch: Well, I add-

Mark Dawson: And then you chipped in as well.

James Blatch: I added three or four more that I could think of, yeah. Procuring-

Mark Dawson: You're so terrible.

James Blatch: Yeah. We are very naughty, but-

Mark Dawson: You used the word, parchment, which I thought was-

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: ... pinch, pinch, pinch the parchment.

James Blatch: Pinch the parchment. A really good one.

Mark Dawson: We are scraping the barrel.

James Blatch: Yeah, we could get some more of those going, couldn't we?

I've also noticed that I couldn't even find her on our list, but hopefully she'll get back to us at some point and tell us which of those selections she prefers to go with.

Mark Dawson: Yes.

James Blatch: Yes. Anyway, we're not grumpy at all. We actually love this community, but occasionally we do deal with email correspondence that makes us smile.

So, the point I was asking you about, Mark, is what's new for this time. And we should say what's old.

We mentioned this last week, that Twitter has really fallen away for authors, so official recommendation from the guru, Mark Dawson, and team SPF is, "Twitter, enjoy looking at cats and perhaps watching breaking news on it, but don't expect it to be a major arrow in your quiver for selling books. It's simply not working."

So we're withdrawing advice on Twitter, organically and Twitter for Ads, which we'd already done some time ago.

And so those courses, those modules, get pulled out. However, coming in, exciting new areas, and two specific courses are being added to the umbrella, Advertising for Authors.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. The main thrust is still Facebook, so I've spent quite a lot of time this month. We all have. Rerecording and reediting the Facebook modules, the four modules that make up that course, and added in some new stuff.

Stuff that's working for me. Stuff I've mentioned before and read through the true value of an advertising campaign, and all that kind of important stuff.

If you're on the list, you will have received an email from me on Wednesday, hopefully this week, where I've got through some new data

that I've had for a couple of campaigns that I've run, just to give people and writers new data on what's working on Facebook ads at the moment.

The new stuff that we're adding is a BookBub module and BookBub CPM ads that Adam Croft has done for us, and I reviewed that over the weekend, and it's excellent.

Adam is a really good teacher. He's got an excellent teaching style. Very clear. It's gorgeous. The module looks great. The information inside is excellent. So I think people will really look forward to getting their teeth into that one.

I am going to be updating the Amazon ads module, but that will probably be towards the end of the year. All students will get that for free. New students from this weekend. Also all old students. I've got some new tactics on that, that are working really well at the moment.

We're also going to be adding a module on Facebook Messenger Box. This sounds quite advanced and esoteric, but it really isn't. It's really simple, using a very simple piece of software to set up a Messenger Box that will enable you to reach your readers in a different way.

The benefit of this, one of the many benefits of this, is that the open rates and the interaction with these Facebook messages is literally through the roof compared to all of the channels that I use.

I'm getting open rates of over 95% on messages and click rates of 35, 45%, which is really amazing. So this is something, also that not many people are doing.

People are worried about it because it sounds complicated, when it really isn't. Because it's a new strategy, it's a really good time to be getting into that and getting started. So we've got a really good module that we're going to be delivering, probably late November on that. Of course, as

before, all students, both new students and older students, will be getting all of this when it's ready to go.

James Blatch: Yeah. Absolutely. Reinforce that point again.

If you're already enrolled, you get it for free. And if you enroll this time and we add courses next year and the year after and the year after that, when Facebook changes and it's updated, you will get all of that for free.

Mark Dawson: God, help! Don't mention that again.

James Blatch: Yeah. It's just how we work.

Mark Dawson: I can't keep doing this.

No, what one of the nice things, actually, in the Facebook group, when we mentioned this. In fact, someone actually posted this spontaneously, and then maybe 20 other people chipped in, was how they we're grateful that we continued to do that.

We offer free stuff. Well, new stuff for free, without charging for anything else. I think that's kind of the least we can do, and there's not ... be honest about it ... this is not a cheap course.

There are much cheaper courses out there, but we want to deliver absolutely fantastic value, and it's really flattering that people would post, and then back up that post with their own feelings and experiences. We weren't looking for compliments. It was something that someone put up there off their own bat.

So it's lovely that people feel that way, and it is important to us that we continue to deliver industry-leading value for the courses that we do do.

James Blatch: There are two options for people who provide courses in this area. One is to make the course quite high level, so it gives you broad brushstrokes in concept without going into too much of the detail, and the reason you do that is 'cause as soon as you go into the detail, you are locked into an update and revision process that is relentless because these platforms change a lot.

The other option is to just say right from the beginning, "This is only going to be a proper use to people if they can watch it, pause it, do it. Watch it, pause it, do it," in that level of detail. Which people tell us they do it in Mark's courses all the time.

I actually was looking, 'cause I look around obviously, at the other courses and buy them quite often. A lot of them are quite cheap. You can pay \$49 for a Facebook ads course if you look around.

And it's so high level, and there's no detail in it. And it looks like it's two years old as well, and not been updated, and it's not our style.

Someone actually even said that in their notes afterwards, said, "We don't go into detail in the screen face because Facebook changes quite often." And I'm thinking, "Yeah, do you know what? That's a reason not to invest even 49 bucks in a course that's not actually going to take you."

And not everybody can look at a high-level idea of how campaigns work and then immediately start using them. I mean, I'm not. I'm somebody who requires somebody to explain in a little bit more detail, exactly how to go through the process and make it work for you.

And that's obviously what we do, but it's a rod for our own back, in the terms of the work that goes into it. But, well, the results, as we heard from our students is that ... Very pleasing to hear.

If you want to make sure that you're notified, by the way, of the exact course opening times, and it may close early. We tend to try and open it for a couple of weeks, but if it fills up very quickly, we have closed it as early as 10 days, maybe even 9 days once, I think. But just keep an eye on that. And you can go to our website to sign up for those notifications.

[Selfpublishingformula.com/ads17 a-d-s-1-7](https://Selfpublishingformula.com/ads17-a-d-s-1-7) and that'll just make sure that you know exactly when the course is open and where to go if you want to get more information on it.

Okay. Now you've been out and about in the locality in Salisbury, in the west of England. I think you're like a celebrity down in Salisbury, in the same way that I still get recognized occasionally, in my BBC days. I was this weekend, I should point out.

Mark Dawson: Oh! My goodness.

James Blatch: ... the Prime Minister's former bodyguard around here spotted me. "Oh, I remember you from the BBC days."

Mark Dawson: I remember you. I remember arresting you.

James Blatch: Yeah, exactly. There was a little bit of that.

But you've been invited to the, or you've just attended the, Salisbury Literary Festival.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, I did. I was a patron. It was the first time they've had the festival and I was a patron, and I spoke on Sunday where I was actually interviewed by Andy Maslen.

He was one of our alumni from SPF, who I've had a few drinks with over the years. And it was lovely. It was about 60 people there. Maybe a bit more than that, and we spoke for an hour.

The thing that came through, as it always does at these things, is that it's very easy for us to forget, or us to think even, that what we know about self-publishing is common knowledge.

Every time I do one of these things, it's just reinforced me that it really isn't. The fact that people are listening to this particular podcast and they know what we're talking about, that puts us, I say, immediately in the top 5% certainly of authors out there.

Most people still think Indie publishing is vanity publishing, which I had fun demolishing that argument last night. And they don't know what's possible.

They don't know that it's possible to publish on all the platforms and what that means financially. All of that kind of stuff was really very evident again, to me last night, so we had fun doing that.

And then, quite easily, you mentioned a kind of local celebrity. I don't know that that's exactly true, but the guy who organized the festival is a guy called Tom. He works at the Favor Academy, and he said the local MP came along on the opening day on Friday, and asked Tom, on Friday and Saturday, if he knew who I was? Which I thought was quite funny.

And the funnier thing is, I mentioned to you, I think I mentioned this to you off-camera, James. We have something at the moment, my wife and I, and we actually went around the MP's house on Wednesday. It's not listed as his house, I think for security reasons, but I saw lots of pictures of him on the wall, so it was pretty obvious that it was his place. It would be quite funny there if he's asking questions about me. I was actually in his house the day before he was asking. I hope they're not connected.

James Blatch: I think it's just time for Parliament if you buy the house.

Mark Dawson: I think that probably that's next. Yeah.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: That's next. It's not that I've got any spare time. I'm sure it's an easy job.

James Blatch: You could join the Intelligence and Security Select Committee, I think, with the research you've done over the years.

Mark Dawson: They won't let me in.

James Blatch: No, you wouldn't pass the clearance.

Good. Okay, look. That's enough waffling for now, 'cause we do have a star interview today.

Hugh Howey is a well-known name in Indie circles and he's somebody who, I think, is probably fair to say, Mark, was one of your muses. Somebody who inspired you to get cracking on self-publishing.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. Not so much for me, he's more of an influence. So, yeah, he was quite active.

He was on the KBoards when I started self-publishing five or six years ago. Less active these days. He's spending more time sailing around the world on his catamaran. But, yeah, he's been very generous with his time and with the experience that he's shared with the community over the years.

He's also something of a shop steward for Indies. I'm not sure how universal that term is, but basically what I mean is with the work he's done with people like Data Guy with author earnings, and also standing up for Indies and taking stands and speaking out for Amazon and that kind of activity.

He has been very active and visible in the community and then outside in press interviews and all of that kind of stuff. He really is a flag bearer for what we do, and he was very inspirational to me when I started. He certainly opened my eyes as to what was possible when *Wool* took off. He did so well with that, and then *Sand* after that, and the other books that he's written.

I've wanted to get him on the podcast for ages. It's quite difficult to pin him down because he's usually at sea somewhere. But I know that the fact that we've got him on is a bit of a coup.

And I know from speaking to audience members that he's one of the most requested guests on the podcast. So it was a real pleasure to hook him up with you, and I'm looking forward to hearing the interview too.

James Blatch: And if you want some inspiration and you want some affirmation that self-publishing is the right thing to do financially, if you want to make a career of it, there's a moment in the middle of this interview, which obviously we've pulled out and used as the title for the podcast where he just drops into the fact that the second time they came after him for a traditional deal.

In the end, he turned down more than a million-dollar deal, because he wanted to remain in self-publishing because he knew how the figures worked, which is a really eye-opening moment. It's a headline moment that the traditional publishing, and media, really need to take notice of.

But let's hear from Hugh.

James Blatch: Hugh Howey. Welcome, indeed, to the Self-Publishing Formula Podcast.

It's a real thrill to have you on. You're a big name in Indie circles and a big name in publishing with your series.

Hugh Howey: Oh, boy. That's a big thing to live up to. I don't feel like that. I feel like most of the people that I know who are working in this space, are doing better things than I am.

It's lots to live up to.

James Blatch: You've had tremendous success and we're going to hear about that, and I'm going to ask you a bit about your approach to writing, but also publishing.

There were some particularly interesting moments on your journey, I think, that speak a lot about the transition at the moment that's going on in publishing. So we'll try and cover all that in the time we've got together. So, thank you for joining us.

I'm going to just ask you where you are, 'cause you're a bit of a traveler as we all know.

Whereabouts are you today?

Hugh Howey: I'm in Brooklyn right now. That's looking towards Manhattan behind me. Just in the States for a few weeks to see family and book lunch and some business meetings, and then back to the boat which is now in New Zealand.

James Blatch: Okay. 'Cause this is your thing at the moment. You've been a sailor, I think, most of your life.

Have you been impassioned about sailing for most of your life? I know you're doing a lot of it.

Hugh Howey: Yeah. I grew up sailing and lived on a sailboat in college.

When I dropped out of college, I sailed down to the Bahamas and lived for a year just island hopping, and then spent 10 years working on other people's boats.

But the dream since high school has been to take a boat around the world. I'm about three-quarters of the way through that now with this little adventure.

James Blatch: Let's see. Did you start in the States, 'cause I know you were in South Africa for a while.

You sailed presumably from the States to South Africa?

Hugh Howey: I started in South Africa.

Just around the Cape of Good Hope from Cape Town. And about two years ago I left. Last summer about ... just over a year ago was when I left New York, sailed up to New England and went up to Maine.

Then about a year ago I left New York with my girlfriend, now fiance, and we are currently in New Zealand with the boat. But we just came back, basically, to meet family and make the engagement official on the 7th. Two days ago.

James Blatch: Okay. Oh, just two days ago, did you say?

Was there an Easter Island kind of mid-Pacific in a proposal?

Hugh Howey: No, that would have been one way to do it, but we left soon after we started dating and I hadn't met her family, and I was raised a little old-fashioned so I wanted to ask her father's permission in person before I sprung the question on her.

James Blatch: You know, I did the same thing, and I think it ingratiated me with her father for life. So it was a nice thing to do. Traditional. That's good.

Great. Okay. Well let's talk about writing.

Why don't you tell us a little bit about how you got started, just on the writing side? Where it began for you?

Hugh Howey: It probably began when I was 12 and read a couple of books back-to-back that made me ... I read *Interest Game* and *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* pretty close to each other, and I wanted more of these worlds, and I thought I'd have to create them on my own.

I was a daydreamer so I started doing that. And then I played around with writing some stories, inspired by those books. That's when I really began dreaming of writing my own books one day.

It took about a little over 20 years to finish my first book, and once I did that, I was hooked on just the feeling of bringing worlds and characters to life.

After 20 years of ineffectiveness and frustrations, I was able to suddenly write two or three books a year for the next five or so years, and I haven't looked back.

James Blatch: That's a fascinating start, and it gives some hope to those of us who are spending a few years on our first books, trying to get going. People on this podcast are bored of hearing me talk about Douglas Adams.

He's my favorite author and I've probably read everything he's written several times over. And I can go and read them through now in a few days. Yes. And I need to say it was an imagination spark for me. I'm sure it was the same for you.

I love the story of him having the idea lying on a back drunk in a field in Prague, I think. He hitchhiked then. He's looking at up at the stars and just ... It was a logical leap that there must be lots of hitchhikers up there, and he brought all that to amazing life.

Okay, so 20 years. Tell me about this bit. So, obviously, you enjoyed writing. You didn't sit there trying to write a single book for 20 years.

This book developed over 20 years? Or literally you tried to write the book?

Hugh Howey: No. I tried to write any book. Like I would have taken anything. I was just desperate to have written a novel at some point in my life.

I would start a book and I would get a few chapters in. I didn't know what the book was about. I didn't know where it was going, and I didn't have the dedication to stick with it.

Frankly, I would start reading what I was writing and think, "This is terrible. No one's ever gonna wanna read this," and so I would lose my self-confidence and give up.

Then a couple of months would go by. Sometimes just a week or so, and I would have another idea for a novel that I had to write. "This time I'm really gonna do it," and I would sit down and get a few chapters in and think, "No one's gonna ever wanna read this," and I would give up again.

Yeah, that was my whole life, like, just ... It was a monkey on my back. I just couldn't wait to finally write a book and have that checked off my bucket list.

James Blatch: Wow. I mean that is so much like the experience of lots of people who never end up writing a book.

And yet something happened with you that this has turned into a fabulously successful career.

Hugh Howey: Yeah, and the career's incredible. I'm so so fortunate, thankful to the readers that have made it possible for me to do this for a living.

But the people out there who are going through what I was going through? Anything that you can do to help them get to that first novel, because that was all it took for me to feel like I can now die in peace. Like it was that big of a goal as an avid reader, and a really hopeful one-day writer to just have that novel that I could say that I had created.

And I'll never forget. I was boxing the proof copies of that first book. I thought, you know, "This is it. I can really die a happy and fulfilled person now."

It was that big of a relief and sense of accomplishment. So the craft had so much good fortune and happenstance, and luck has been involved in that, and I'm thankful for it, but I would have taken just that novel. It meant that much to me.

James Blatch: That's incredible to hear. Although I'm lucky in this position. I get a lot of encouragement to finish my first book, but that is as encouraging as anything I have ever heard, which is you describing exactly what a lot of us go through.

Just thinking it's not good enough, leaving it alone, finding it difficult to get to it, starting it again. But you got over that, that mountain, so I'm sure that I and a lot of other people who listen to this podcast can take some inspiration from that.

Let's get to the 20-year point then, when you got the book and what did you do? Presumably, at this point ... Give us a year. Where is this in the timeline?

Hugh Howey: 2009.

James Blatch: Okay.

So you're looking for a literary agent at that point, rather than self-publishing?

Hugh Howey: Again this, it goes to my self-esteem as a writer, I thought I'm just gonna publish ... I had a blog that I created to follow my writing journey, and I thought, "Okay, I'm just gonna put this on the blog in sections," you know, like serialize it?

And just put it up for free and hopefully I'll get like five people, one of them being someone I'm not related to, to actually read this whole thing. So I was gonna give it away for free, but I started sending them the Word document out to anyone who would read it. I've never protected my stuff or been, you know, withheld it. It's like, "Do you wanna read this? Here's the Word document."

Someone I knew, online through a forum, read it. It was an editor, who loved it and said, "You can't just put this out for free. Like this is too good. You owe it to readers to publish this."

So I started querying agents and publishers and found a small press that was gonna pay me money and do all the editorial and cover art and pagination, all that stuff.

I assumed it was going to cost me money to publish this. I didn't think I was going to get paid to have it published.

So I signed the first deal that got offered to me, and published that debut novel with a small press called Norlights Press.

James Blatch: So you got a deal purely on the basis of the quality of the work, and it wasn't even a deliberate attempt to find literary agent.

It was just happenstance for you at the beginning.

Hugh Howey: Well I queried agents as well. I had to learn to write a query letter, which was painful. It was worse than writing the novel, and I sent that out to, I don't know, 20 people that I found on a list of agents in a big book in the local library.

I also found some publishers that took unagented submissions and sent it off to them. Actually, I think I heard from Norlights Press and the Acquisitions Editor there, Nadine Carter, because I was tweeting in the voice of my character about my protagonist wanting to have her book published. I was sharing snippets of the writing on my blog. Again, I was just putting everything out there.

I was following a lot of publishing people and trying to get into that community, and I had an editor from the publisher say, "Tell me more about this Molly character."

So we tweeted back and forth, and I submitted to her. While I was doing all the normal stuff through querying and sending off to agents, I ended up connecting with someone via social media while I was in that process.

That went great, but I really quickly saw that **everything the publisher was doing for me were things that I could do for myself**, and that they were going to rely on me to find readers and to promote the work.

I saw the tools that were required, and the one-time services that you're paying for, the rest of your life for. Like the pagination, the editing, the cover art, and I thought, "Man, I can do all this myself."

I've always been kind of a do-it-yourself sort of person in other areas of my life, so luckily the publisher was ... We had a great relationship and I was able to buy the rights back from them, because I wanted to self-publish the rest of the series, and I thought it'd be easier to market it if I owned the rights to the first book.

It was one of the best decisions in my publishing career was to get those rights back and to just focus on self-publishing and not waste time querying and looking for agents and publishers, but just writing, publishing, and connecting with readers.

James Blatch: So that decision, I want to just focus on this for a second. First of all, just going back a bit, the book ...

This turned out to be the first book in the Silo series?

Hugh Howey: The first book in the Silo series is called *Wool*. And that was like my 7th published work.

I started with three, four books in the smaller Twilight series and sandwiched in the middle of those, I released a book called, *Halfway Home*, which is still a fan favorite today, and a novelette called, *The Plagiarist*.

I'd written and published all of those before I wrote the short story that *Wool* began its life as.

James Blatch: Oh, okay.

You signed a one-book deal or two-book deal at the beginning.

Hugh Howey: It was a one-book deal and then before the book even published, they sent me a contract and an offer on the second book, 'cause they loved the book and they wanted to lock me down.

And I had that contract. I think I still have it in a drawer somewhere. I had that contract and I already felt like maybe I'd made a mistake going with a publisher, and that was a really tough decision because I really loved the people at the publishing house. I've loved the people at all the publishing houses I've worked with. The system you have to go through to publish with them is not always the best for every project.

I had this contract in my hand, and I'm looking at it, wrestling with what to do, and that's when I sent off a very painful email, but very fortuitous email, which was to say, "I appreciate everything you've done for me. I'm going to self-publish from now on, and if you're interested, I'd love to buy the rights back to that first book, and how can we negotiate that?" And, yeah, it was really difficult.

But I also remember it was very difficult when I signed that first book contract. Writers dream about getting that contract, but we went out to dinner to celebrate and I ... We're signing the contract ... I almost felt, even then, like something in the pit of my stomach here.

You're giving away the rights to this work, this piece of art that, like I said earlier in the show, like how much it meant to me and how much I labored over the act of getting that first novel out and now I was giving it to someone else to do what they will with. And that was painful.

So getting those rights back was a much happier day for me than signing that first publishing contract.

James Blatch: Yeah. You know, you talk about it. Obviously, something's going off. An alarm bell ringing in your head somewhere, but I think a lot of writers might get that, and then there's quite a big leap to what you did.

Especially back then. I mean, now it's a little bit more obvious to some traditional published writers that there's another way that can be a lot more financially rewarding and rewarding in the creative sense.

But back then, we're talking really early days for self-publishing. Pre-Kindle actually.

Hugh Howey: Yeah. The Kindle had just come out. KDP had just launched, I don't know, not long before it. And everyone agreed that I was a moron.

I was on a lot of writing forums looking for advice, and talking about agents and publishers. And I was presenting some of the ideas that I now have since blogged about for years, but saying like, "Why do we go about it this way? Why don't we try to find readers and develop a following first, and then have agents and publishers come to us, and try to hire us?? And at that point we'd be in a position of strength.

And I was looking at the way musicians get started, and comedians and other entertainers, and they develop a following, often on their own.

They go out on the street corner, play guitar. They work and play in little bars and clubs, and they work their way up. They're an opening act and all these things that they do before they get signed.

I didn't understand why literature was different. Why we would have to write this whole thing without playing live and testing it with an audience, and then see what would someone would give us for it without them seeing how much the audience loves this, or whether or not people will get into this. So nothing made sense.

I would publish my opinions on a forum and everyone would tell me like, "You're an idiot. This has been done like this for a long time. It has to be done like this. If you do it any other way you're going to destroy your career."

And I tell you, man, it was really difficult to ignore so many people telling me I was wrong, and to go with what I felt made sense.

I wasn't alone. Luckily there were other people who had had some success as well doing this. Nothing like we have now, where it looks like, "Hey. Your chances are probably better in the self-publishing route than the traditional publishing route."

At the time it looked like anomalies, and for a while, when my success happened, I was held up as an anomaly. Now you look at the bestseller list and a lot of genres that are amenable to self-publishing and the anomalies are the traditionally published writers who've appeared in the last five or seven years. It's very few.

I got lucky. I've always been a bit of an outcast, and had been immune to peer pressure in my life for a long time. I never got into getting drunk and chasing women.

A lot of things that made me a bit of an outcast when I was younger, and I think that really paid dividends when I had to make publishing decisions.

James Blatch: Yeah, well outlier is a better word than outcast. And we need outliers.

We need people who pioneer these things, and you certainly have done that. I fully admire. I'm sure people listening will, your sense of independence and your resolve in those early days.

Sailing's a good metaphor isn't it? Sailing against the tide, which is exactly what you did then.

I'm assuming, by the way, that the offer you got for the next book and onwards was not an insignificant offer. It wasn't that you were looking at it thinking, "This is not much money."

It was an offer that would have looked good in anyone's mailbox.

Hugh Howey: Back then, if you'd offer me 50 bucks for a book and I'd have to seriously consider it. I was living in a 700-square-foot house and making \$10 an hour as a bookseller and they only offered me 30 hours a week for the job 'cause they don't want me to get full benefits.

We ate stew almost every day and a lot of rice. We were happy and we were healthy, and we didn't have much debt at all 'cause I'd put every bit of sweat I could into our previous houses into the next house, and tried to live debt-free. But, yeah, any money was a big deal.

But because we lived a simple lifestyle, I was also able to not let money cause me to make bad decisions. So when I started getting ... I think my first offer for *Wool*, we went through three rounds of offers.

My first offer was for \$50,000, and that would have been a life-changing amount of money. And then it became several hundred thousand dollars, and then we started getting ... Let's say we had to, my ex-girlfriend and I, as a householder looking at these offers, and the next round was in the seven figures.

And at this point, it's like the kind of, "If we live our simple lifestyle, we'd never have to worry about working or income again." And saying no to every round of those offers, because I knew that we were being taken advantage of every time. It wasn't as easy as sometimes the narrative of my

publishing career makes it seem. I had to really spend a lot of sleepless nights like, wondering if I'm just being an idiot and I'm wrong about this.

So hindsight makes it seem like, even for myself, I remember it sometimes as being really easy, but it certainly wasn't.

James Blatch: Oh, I don't think anyone can say no to a seven-figure offer and feel that this was an easy and straightforward decision. It certainly would not have been.

So let's build up to that point a little bit. You took the rights back. You negotiated that and presumably asked for some settlement there. And you moved forward to your second book.

This is the point at which you got your claws properly into independent publishing.

Hugh Howey: Yeah. It wasn't much different because, while we were publishing the first book like, I was trying to get involved in making sure the book was as wonderful as possible, so I would read the proof and realize like, the pagination could be a little bit better.

I didn't know what the word pagination meant at the time. I'm researching stuff. I'm finding out what kerning is and how you ... what widows and orphans are when you paginate, and how to really control the flow of reading through how the written word is spaced out on the page.

These are important decisions, and a lot of writers assume that publishers are gonna know more than they are about how to present their work, but I learned really quickly that it was going to be up to me to know more than my publishing partners if I wanted my work to be the best it could be.

Now, before writing, my artistic expression was through fine arts, so I was big into painting and drawing when I was in school, and when I was in high

school my dad was a carpenter and a woodworker, so I learned how to build my own frames and stretch bedsheets, adjusted them, and make my own canvasses so I could make them the size that I needed. I think that was a very informative period of my life because I learned that the presentation and the accomodation of these works is just as important as the surface and the gloss.

So writing for me is not just a manuscript and then you hand it off to someone else and, "Here. I don't care how you present it." I think very few artists are like that.

Musicians, which I've also been lucky enough to work with over the years. You know, they go to do a sound check and they'll have a soundboard. They know how the thing works and they want to make sure the sound is just right. They don't just trust someone to do it for them.

And so, while my first book was being published, I started taking the same level of care in how the book was presented. I started doing the cover art because I realized I could do a better job than the publisher could, 'cause I would spend weeks on manipulating individual pixels, whereas they would just hire someone and throw something together.

So this was just part of my education, just studying how this first book was going to come out, and by the time it did come out I realized I can do what they're doing and keep 70% instead of making them money and keeping 12%.

James Blatch: Yeah. Well, 12%'s pretty good, so some traditional deals I've been hearing about recently say. Even so.

Do you think this is changing across fields now? Not just in publishing.

You've got your own experience in art, but this exchange of information has started to unravel the traditional way of doing things.

Do you think we're getting to a point where creative people are much more empowered now to take control?

Hugh Howey: Absolutely. It's happening, not just in the creative fields. Airbnb is dis-intermediating hotels and Uber's dis-intermediating taxis, so this is happening all over the place.

In the creative field, literature is the one that's lagging the most and there's a very, to me, a very simple explanation for why that is.

But, you know, comedians are self-producing, and you can see it happening at the top of other fields.

Louis CK does his own shows 'cause he knows he's the reason people are coming, not because it's on HBO, that people are seeking out his work.

Macklemore and Ryan, a rap duo out of Seattle, they won Best Album of the Year with a self-produced album, which actually it has songs on the album, talking about why they wanted to stay independent. One song, in particular, about how terrible these music contracts are. The last part of the song I can't repeat because of the language.

We're seeing it all over the place in other fields and they celebrate it. They celebrate independent filmmakers, independent artists, independent photographers.

Why we treat independent authors any differently, it can really, I think, can only be pinned down to how the industry is covered. And it's covered by writers. These are people that celebrate independence in other art forms.

They write glowingly about independent filmmakers, but when it comes to the thing that they wanna do, which is get one of their books published,

they all kowtow to the big five and it's created a distortion field that aspired writers can't see through.

James Blatch: I did have an interesting conversation the other day with a friend who works for what's PMI that's been taken over by ... Well, no. They eventually merged.

He put the counterargument to this to me, which you don't hear very often, and I'm a bit of a Pink Floyd fan and come to think of, I've probably got a Pink Floyd T-shirt on underneath here. And of course, they famously wrote a song called, Have a Cigar, which is about an encounter with a record producer who finished their conversation by saying, "Which one of you is Pink?"

He literally had no idea about the band having wax lyrical about their songs, making stuff up. And that's how they viewed the industry, and if you read their autobiographies of the individual members of Pink Floyd, they had a difficult time with the producers in the suits who dragged them into studios, pulled albums out and the one they didn't want.

My friend makes the point they're probably inherently lazy people, which is almost certainly correct, and had it not been for those suits, we would not have had those great albums. And you do, sometimes, need some discipline around musicians.

So I'm thinking, writers are a little bit different, 'cause I think they work, they're often quite entrepreneurial and they work by themselves. With groups, I wonder how many groups we will not hear of in an independent age, where there isn't big money to be made by the corporate out of them.

That's just a counterpoint. I don't know what you think about that.

Hugh Howey: Yeah, it's interesting. I disagree though with artists being lazy. I think we would love to get away with being lazy, but the ones who do, well, I mean, the work ethic of the Beatles, for instance.

The reason they got so good is the amount of hours they put in, and I think that's true of a lot of the bands. The musicians I know personally, like where I've just had conversations with, like Jacob Yankovitch who had an onerous contract. It was like 12 or 15 albums. Something crazy. And when we were speaking a couple of years ago, he was just so excited to get that last album out so he could do his own thing.

They get you while you're trying to get your start, and they get you to sign a contract that you'll never be able to get out of, and it's not accidental.

It's really preying on people's hopes and dreams and aspirations. Usually when people are getting that first offer, they think, "This is more than I ever dreamed of." That's the situation I was in.

Straight Out of Compton, a great film that really looks at the behind-the-scenes of what ended up being one of the great bands, to kind of implode over these sorts of rights questions, and go through some really tumultuous times, going from one label to another.

And finally Drake creating his own label. These aren't that old of things, and I don't know.

I would disagree with your friend. I would say that most artists who have had success like this have to work very hard. And they can easily take over the handful of things that the middlemen are doing, and robbing them in the process.

James Blatch: Yeah. 'Cause the other side was someone like Van Morrison who, I think, to this day doesn't play Brown Eyed Girl 'cause he makes no money from it, signed it as this very young guy and his first record. It was

his biggest hit of his life, and his finances would be totally different if he got the money from that.

And you think how unfair that is. He wrote the song. He sings the song. You hear it every week on the radio, and he is now angry and upset about that.

So that's the other side of the contracts and it bears out what you say about preying in those early days.

I guess bringing it back to you. You may have a rock career in the background, I don't know, but let's just focus on the books for now.

You got your teeth into self-publishing. I'm again going to say I'm full of admiration for the way that you started to see what was important then. We start to take for granted now, that those of us who talk about this all the time, but there's lots of people who are writing still don't really, I think, understand or get this, how important a cover is, how important a blurb is, all the rest of it.

You started to work this out very early, without there being all the resources around that there are today.

And then you launched your second book and relaunched the first book independently?

Hugh Howey: Yeah. I guess all the way through *Wool* and *Shift*. Everything that came after, I was just self-publishing.

The best part was like the pace. As soon as it was ready, I could press a button and have it out. I can have the eBook ready immediately, and then it would take a couple of weeks to do the print book. It didn't matter to me, without coordinating the release on the same day. "If this is ready and readers want it, make it available now."

I didn't think, "Oh, we should wait six months to do all this marketing and make sure you hit the bookstore at this time." There was just a direct connection between me and the reader.

I think one thing that helped with understanding how cover art and blurbs and these things work is that I was a bookseller well before I was a published writer.

I spent a lot of time trying to sell other people's books and seeing which books sold and which didn't. And talking to a lot of readers and understanding the publishing industry from the perspective of the publisher's number one client, which is the bookstore, not the reader.

I would meet with reps who would come in, we'd have stacks of catalogs, and they were trying to sell me on these books.

And we'd do author events all the time, and I'd meet authors and meet a New York Times Best Seller, who's like, "Yeah, I've gotta get a flight back. My day job starts tomorrow."

And I'm like, "You have a day job?" I was learning things about income and stuff that you can only learn, really, from behind the curtain.

So that bookstore job, I owe so much to that. This is something I would say to people who want to be a writer. **What are you doing to support yourself while you're trying to make it as a writer?**

People who want to be on Broadway are waiting tables in New York so they can respond to auditions, and they can hang out with other people who are making it, and just be steeped in that culture.

What are you doing as a writer to be steeped in that culture? Working in a bookstore's not lucrative but, you know, that's part of being a struggling

artist to make it. You've got to make sacrifices and really immerse yourself, surround yourself with what you want to be.

James Blatch: How many books have you got out now?

Hugh Howey: If I'd have to guess, I'd say it's like around 15 or so.

It depends on how you ... What do you call a book? Some of them, like *Shift*, was published as three separate books, but when it was picked up by Random House and Manor, HMH, they packaged them as a single book.

James Blatch: You just hinted there. I know you've done some traditional deals, and held on to, I think, the eBook rights in most, if not all, cases?

Is that where you are today?

Hugh Howey: Yeah. Most of the deals I do now are **print only deals** and they time out after five or seven years, so I get even those rights back. And then we can renegotiate or I can go do a different publisher or self-publish. But after a length of time I can see how things are going and what the fair market value is.

James Blatch: Yeah. Well you're in good company, because I think JK Rowling, her deals are print only and she holds onto the eBook rights as well, so not a bad way of doing things.

And what was your thinking behind that? Because it's becoming increasingly easier to distribute print onto bond, et cetera, with those organizations, principally Amazon, but there are others.

Is this something that you're, obviously, with your short-term deals monitoring?

Hugh Howey: Yeah. Well, the short-term nature is something a publisher shouldn't have rights for that long.

If, after five or seven years, if the book's not selling well, then maybe I want to get the print rights back to do something different with it. You know, I could reedit it, I could change the name, and re-market it to a different crowd if it hasn't sold well.

All the options would be mine, but giving lifetime plus 70 years rights to someone just seems ridiculous. We can't tell what those rights would be worth.

It's definitely favorable for publishers. I don't understand why artists even sign contracts like that.

If it wasn't for the desperation to be with a publisher, no writer would sign that contract and they'd have to offer us better terms, but there's always someone in the wings who would say, "Yeah. Whatever. I'll take whatever you can give me." And that makes it difficult for us to make meaningful change in the industry.

One thing that's helped is having Amazon and other self-publishing outlets so we can compete with these publishers and make money on our own, and they could see what they're missing out on.

And that's how I've been able to get a lot of the rights done. A lot of the contracts that I've gotten is that I've done very well on my own, and continue to say no to publishers until they offer what previously people said were impossible deals.

James Blatch: Yeah. And that's definitely an empowering aspect of having successes and independent writing.

Bella Andre, who we had earlier on this podcast, was able to negotiate a seven-figure deal by basically turning her laptop around during the negotiation and showing them the spreadsheet.

Hugh Howey: I did the same thing. When I was with Random House, they were offering me seven figures for something and I said, "Look, this is what I'm making each month. You're not gonna woo me with piles of cash that size. I'm doing just fine on my own."

At first they were shocked, like there's just a lot of dropped jaws and wide eyes and silence.

Then one of the editors said, "But wouldn't you love to say that you're with Random House?" I told them point blank, and this wasn't to be snarky at all. I said, "Look, you have to pay me extra to tell people I'm with Random House because a lot of my cache and a lot of the trust people have in my work is that they know that it's all self-made."

So if I'm on the best seller list and there's no one behind me, then people assume it's the quality of the work. If I'm on the best seller list and it's published with Random House, people assume, "Well that's what happens to Random House books. They make best seller lists." So I lose a lot of credibility.

But being with a major publisher. If I were to have a film deal with Ridley Scott and it's a Random House book, well, that's what happens to Random House books. If I do a deal with Ridley Scott, which I did as a self-published work, then it's on my own and people think, "God, what did Ridley see in this work that was so amazing that even with no publisher behind them, they did this major film deal?"

And I explained that to them like, "The cache is a burden now, and you guys would be a ding on my resume."

James Blatch: Just on the film deals, I think I read somewhere that you sold *Silo*, to Fox?

Hugh Howey: Yeah. Ridley Scott and Steve Zaillian, and Fox. For nine and a half more hours and they have the rights.

James Blatch: Okay.

Hugh Howey: At midnight tonight, I get those rights back, which is unbelievable. I never thought I would see these rights again.

Even when I took the deal, I thought, "Nothing ever gets made so I might as well do this deal because it's Ridley Scott. It'd be great for book sales."

But I've always wanted to do a TV show instead of a feature, but when this went to auction, they had lots of people interested but Ridley Scott, in having that cache, said like, "Look. Do the deal now. It's called a preempt. Do the deal now or we're gonna pull out," and I thought, "Man, this is like the biggest name in science fiction. That's what I want for marketing and promoting the books."

So we did the deal. But by the time people see this, we're back on the table and we're already getting a flood of inquiries.

Some of the same people who'd been bugging us almost monthly for the past five years, and I'm so excited to be taking these rights back out and, hopefully, put a TV show together.

James Blatch: That is exciting. A TV show would be absolutely fantastic, I think, for that. Plus, I understand why Ridley Scott is an attractive person to sell your rights to. He makes fantastic films.

And you used that at the time as some publicity surrounding signing the rights to help boost the books?

Hugh Howey: Yeah, because I know how hard it is to get something actually adapted, and even more difficult to get it adapted well.

So my idea at the time was we'll do this deal because, well A) the option money was quite good, and I can live just off the yearly option deals that I do on my work, so that's definitely worth thinking about.

But I thought for making a splash and getting some publicity, it'd be hard to top this. And I was right. We got all kinds of mentions in Hollywood trades and a front-page spread on The Washington Post and all kinds of stuff that I don't think would've happened had we not pinned that deal.

I basically took the bird in the hand rather than the two in the bush.

James Blatch: Okay, now in the background whilst you've been having the success and the industry has started to really shift from that traditional model to the independent model.

At some point met Data Guy, and this has become a partnership that has shone a real analytical light and given some numbers and figures proof to what you know is happening.

How did that relationship come about?

Hugh Howey: It's hard to call it a partnership because he does all the work. I've been along for the ride.

Data Guy reached out to me. He knew what I was advocating. At the time, I had a thread on K-Board just asking for people to private message me or email me if they were making over \$500 a month.

I picked a pretty low bar, but it's like life-changing money. I knew the difference that \$500 a month made for me when I was just starting to sell, you know, before *Wool*, it was at a very small pace.

My suspicion, after being at a lot of conferences and talking to a lot of writers, was that this was a much bigger number than anyone knew, and a number that Amazon was never going to tell.

I started hearing from a flood of people. A huge part about advocacy was to find out more about this data. I thought surveying and basically trying to get people to share information was the only way to do it.

Data Guy was a lot smarter than me, infinitely smarter than me, and he knew how to write a bot that would crawl Amazon product pages, and to back into sales rates by getting data from self-published authors on "Here's my rank and here's my daily sales," and correlating that.

And when you see this data on the curve, it's just beautiful because it's so concentrated on this typical sales curve that you would expect.

Then when he basically emailed me and said, "Hey. I think I've got the answers to what you're looking for, and here's the pie chart," and I about fell out of my chair when I saw them.

That's when he told me that I should go down and see these pie charts and I couldn't believe it. He assumed that he had done something wrong, and he started double- and triple-checking everything and questioning his methodology.

And I'm looking at it thinking there has to be something wrong. We'd go over it again, walk ourselves through it, and what we were seeing was something that you could actually see just by studying the best seller list manually, which is that self-published authors were taking home more

money than the big five authors combined, when it comes to eBook sales on Amazon.

We knew that that percentage of book sales was growing and growing, which meant the self-published authors were reaching parity with the combined authors of the biggest five publishers in the world. This was mind-blowing stuff at the time.

When we published it, there was so much stigma and so many articles coming out decrying self-publishing. And it was all self-serving stuff.

People trying to talk authors out of self-publishing. It was people who make money from people publishing traditionally, so it was selfish propaganda. Self-serving, I should say, propaganda.

We let people know like, "Hey. There's reasons to publish traditionally, but making money's not one of them. Having reaching readers is not one of them. Having a successful career is not one of them."

And then all the other obvious things about artistic control, and freedom and pace of output. The more we looked at it, it's just like almost no reason you would try to start your career with a traditional published book. It would make no sense.

So we finally had some data to go with what we were sensing in the trenches. Data Guy cut through a whole lot of really negative press and stigma and gave people the courage to do what I had done, which was follow your gut and common sense, and do something against the grain of all the great advice out there from people who've been in the game too long, I think, to see how it's changing.

James Blatch: We've had Data Guy on the podcast and it was fascinating, and it was, as you say, beautiful.

It's sort of a lovely word about data when it's presented like that 'cause you can write all the editorials you want, but there's something beautiful about that curve and that graph, and there's black and white numbers.

And, of course, the traditional industry is closely aligned with the kind of media voices and, in some cases, they are the same company so they're always gonna have a loud voice.

We hear that still, to this day. And, in fact, there were a few things, indicators, that gave them grist to their mill. I think Kindle sales started to slow at some point, and suddenly we had a barrage of, "It's over. Don't you worry about that." We're past that point now, but I don't think anyone took that seriously even then.

Hugh Howey: Yeah. And no one's talking about the real danger here, which is that more and more people might stop reading.

That baffles me that the publishing industry doesn't try to do more to win readers over at a younger age. I mean this is something that, especially sports leagues are really smart. They're doing like, trying to have kids of a young age turned onto the NFL and the NBA, and grow your audience really early on.

Publishers just are fighting there with the same scraps that they've always gotten. A diminished number of scraps. It was people's intention to burn it elsewhere.

Actually, publishers should be working with teachers to create a curriculum that turns more people into avid readers, getting authors into schools and to read to young kids so they can humanize the people buying the books. Throw out the pie.

Everyone in lots of other artistic industries are working on that. In publishing, you see almost no effort towards that. A little bit towards

libraries with some reading programs for youths, but a lot of that is being directed by the libraries themselves instead of by publishers.

James Blatch: Yeah, I think that the big danger is that our share of the pie goes down, of course, as more people self-publish, the competition will get greater.

I'm the first person to admit that a lot of my success comes from timing. I happened to be publishing as all these tools were coming on and I am very fortunate that I wasn't trying to publish 10 years earlier or later.

One of the downsides of the way that the self-publishing market is emerging is that, obviously by its nature, it's a bit disporous. It's individuals rather than a collective organization.

You just pointed the finger a little bit at traditional institutes, saying that they're working at the wrong place. It should be growing readership. In fact, I'm sure lots of people in traditional publishing are listening to you, would listen to that and completely agree that it's the most important thing any of us can do.

But how does the independent world do that when they are independent? They're all individuals. Because they've got a lot of vibrant, dynamic people, dare I say it? You, Mark, and lots of others we could mention, would be great in front of kids and great in front of that generation and that environment.

But where's the organization come from when we're all individuals?

Hugh Howey: It's difficult. I mean it's a bunch of individual efforts. When I was working in a bookstore still and writing, I would drive several hours each way to go to schools and talk to classrooms and was likely to have some English teachers who were excited to, in the small parts of North

Carolina that I lived in, to get an author in front of their kids, to talk about their books.

So individual outreach is important from each self-published writer, which expands a number of writers out there doing outreach enormously, 'cause you don't have frustrated manuscript submitters trying to do outreach.

You've got people that actually have a book on the shelf doing outreach. So that's a way that self-publishing helps amplify that effort.

And then you do this. We aren't really alone. We do anthologies together. We talk in forums and private Facebook groups. We get together in our towns and writing groups. I think, as collectives, can continue to do what they can to turn people onto reading.

By pricing lower, we advocate for more reading, preferable to less reading, by adopting print on demand, so that books are never unavailable.

Focusing on eBooks so that our books are available to everyone in the country and around the world, and in every instant instead of worrying where bookstores are like publishers do. It's very urban focused in that way, the publishers.

So all of these things that self-publishers do to further their own aim are things that also, I think promote reading.

And I would say if there's somebody measuring that stuff, I'd be surprised if we didn't find that self-publishing wasn't preventing a slide in leadership that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Especially with just the pricing alone.

James Blatch: Yeah. So it's all very systemic. It's built into self-publishing as it helps promote reading, which is a happy coincidence.

Shit, you know, we're taking up a lot of your time. We're coming up for the 50-minute mark. It's been fascinating talking to you. You are on the New Zealand leg of this enormous world tour.

Are you going to be in Europe at some point? Are you coming round that way?

Hugh Howey: Yeah. I haven't decided yet. My plan right now is to head back to South Africa 'cause I just fell in love with the country. And pull into places like Plettenberg Bay and the Saint Francis Bay that I saw when I first launched the boat.

But the Mediterranean would be a lot of fun, so we have to decide if we want to skip the run down south and head up to the Suez Canal and brave the pirates, as they are pretty thick there.

Or go up the west coast of Africa and enter the Med through the Straits of Gibraltar that way. Or from South Africa just head across to Brazil and then the Caribbean.

I don't know. I'd love to see Europe by boat, but it might have to be a different boat or a charter or another time in my life.

I will be in Europe just in a few weeks. I'm heading to the Conrad Literary Festival in Krakow, Poland, on my way back to New Zealand. And I'm sure I'll be popping in and out of Europe as we leave the boat in various places during this trip.

James Blatch: Sounds an amazing experience. Krakow is lovely, by the way. You'll enjoy that and you let us know if you're in London then.

You said at the beginning you didn't fall into the big beer drinking, but you have the odd beer?

Hugh Howey: Ah, man. I love beer, but yard beer? I'll never be able to finish one of those things. Like that is insane.

James Blatch: It's real beer.

Hugh Howey: I love my beer cold, like frigid, frosty cold. So I would much rather someone just keep coming by and like, topping up a little thing of beer and so, you know, by the time you get to the end of that yard beer, it's just warm.

James Blatch: I just spent two weeks in the States, cupping the beer with my hands trying to bring up the temperature.

Hugh Howey: Are you serious?

James Blatch: Yeah! Of course I'm serious!

Hugh Howey: Oh, that's crazy. I know beer is supposed to be drunk warm, but-

James Blatch: No, no. That's-

Hugh Howey: ... traditionally it was for a long time.

James Blatch: It's not warm, but it's below room temperature, but it's certainly not so freezing you can't taste it. Anyways. We need to have a discussion over a beer in London.

Hugh Howey: Absolutely. That sounds awesome.

James Blatch: Thank you so much, indeed, for joining us, Hugh. It's been absolutely brilliant.

Hugh Howey: Oh, thank you. I don't know how the time went by so fast. I could talk to you forever. So thanks for having me on.

James Blatch: Okay. There is Hugh. What a lovely guy as well. And very sorted. Passionate, obviously, about his sailing. So we got him, I think, in Brooklyn for that interview, but ... and, I should say, I forgot to sort of say congratulations to him on the podcast, but he just got engaged, I think, like two days before.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. I remember seeing his ... I follow him on Facebook and he had posted that.

For those who are interested in what's possible with an Indie lifestyle ... Now he's obviously a big outlier. Not that many Indies are doing as well as him, but if you want to have a bit of lifestyle envy, then it's worth following him on Facebook because he has posted some of the most amazing videos of his adventures sailing around the world. Sailing.

I've seen him and his fiancee now swimming with big whales and he's got a drone that he flies around so you can see his amazing yacht in incredible places. It's pretty impressive stuff.

It was lovely to get him on. I think he's moored his boat ... if that's the correct term. It probably isn't ... in New Zealand and flew over to do some business in the States, and then I think he's off to continue his global adventuring. Good for him. He's a real inspiration.

James Blatch: Yeah. It was a great pleasure talking to Hugh. And we'll talk to him again in a year or so and find out how he's going on. But I found that a really amazing interview.

If you have a feeling that there's a revolution going on in publishing at the moment, but you're not really sure where it is or how it is, listen to that interview. You can see exactly what is happening.

And that URL, again Mark, we should give out for people interested in the course. If they want to know exactly when it's opening or where to go and to read more about it you can go to [selfpublishingformula.com/ads17 a-d-s-1-7](https://selfpublishingformula.com/ads17-a-d-s-1-7)

Good, well it's a busy day today, so I'm going to be interviewing in an hour and a half, Mrs. Dawson, who's going to make her debut on the podcast.

We're going to be talking about the foundation, which is something we've set up in SPF to pick out authors who are perhaps struggling financially a little bit or can't find, or just need a bit of a leg-up.

And we're going to do what we can to put some resources their way to try and get them, get their careers going. And it's a foundation that's open to anyone to apply for. So we're going to go into detail about that in a future podcast. But I'm doing those interviews this afternoon with Lucy and Ricardo from REETEE. And then, that's it.

So you and I are heads down from Wednesday onwards. The course opens November the 8th, and the podcasts, of course, will be back as normal.

We've got a good couple of author interviews coming up from memory, from our list. We've got some really exciting young authors who've just launched themselves, and launched themselves very successfully. So it's always really interesting to hear exactly how they did that, what process they followed and so on. So they're coming up in the next couple of weeks.

And I think that's it. I haven't forgotten anything, have I?

Mark Dawson: No, the one thing ... No, they haven't actually.

I was going to mention Patreon. If people want to support the show we are at Patreon.com/SPFPodcast

That's pretty much it, so it's a question now of we're retreating back to the recording studio and getting some new stuff down so we're ready for when the course goes live on Wednesday.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: So, yeah. For those who are watching on YouTube, I've got my full-course launch beard into effect at the moment, 'cause I've just too lazy. I don't have time to shave at the moment.

James Blatch: And I shaved. I'm clean-shaven because of the interviews I'm doing today. I care about my appearance.

Mark Dawson: I don't care about my appearance. I haven't got time for things like that.

James Blatch: I care about your appearance.

Thank you, Mark. And thank you very much, indeed, for listening. We'll be back next Friday. Have a good week writing-

Mark Dawson: And a good week selling.

Bye-bye.

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We'll see you next time.