

EPISODE 94: A HELPING HAND FROM SPF – WITH REEDSY'S RICARDO FAYET

Speaker 1: Two writers, one just starting out, the other a best seller. Join James Blatch, and Mark Dawson, and their amazing guests, as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello, and welcome to the Self-Publishing Formula Podcast with James and not Mark this week, but Lucy Dawson, another Dawson. Hey. How are you?

Lucy Dawson: Hello. I'm very well. Thanks. How are you?

James Blatch: I've got to say an official welcome to the Self-Publishing Formula Podcast. This is your first time on.

Lucy Dawson: It is my first time on. Yes. I joined the crew in the background maybe about six months ago now. My first time on the podcast. Yeah. I'm really excited.

James Blatch: Not new to SPF, but new to the podcast.

Quite a few people I think who've been dropping us emails may have had some contact with you, Lucy, because you're busy on our help desk occasionally and stuff like that.

Lucy Dawson: Yes. I get involved with some of the support queries. You'll see me drop into some of the groups as well and crack a few jokes or try and answer some bits and bobs where I can.

James Blatch: The comedy's my area.

Lucy Dawson: Very much learning the ropes, but getting there.

James Blatch: Okay. We should just say that some of the things that you bring to SPF, you have a background in marketing. I know you've got a very keen eye for design and marketing.

Lucy Dawson: Yeah. That's right.

James Blatch: I forget. It was alcohol or fizzy drinks, one of the two, or both?

Lucy Dawson: My background is purely in sales and marketing. I started off in alcohol. I've sold the majority of alcohol I think to the majority of people.

When I first met Mark actually, we were great to have around at dinner parties, because we'd always crack the joke that he basically watched pornography for a living, and I made cocktails. Yeah. We were good dinner party guests.

We've got a bit more sedate since then. My background's in marketing.

I did a lot of things with alcohol, as I say, and then most recently, I launched a little soft drink for a brewer, as you do.

That was really, really fun, so I got involved in everything, from some of the research, the quote unquote, research, through to the design, even the R&D, so tasting formula, understanding how sugars work with various different fruits, all of that kind of stuff.

I basically did everything. I was a team of one. Doing that on four days a week whilst bringing up two preschoolers as well, I'm pretty much the queen of planning and of project management. Yeah. I could probably

project manage Satan out of Hell if I had enough reason to do so. That's what I do well.

James Blatch: You've brought the planning to SPF, which was excellent. What people may also notice is how the design has changed, quite radically actually, since you've been on. You've brought in a couple of designers for us as well, and a new website.

John Dyer and you really were the two people who worked principally on that. We've had such good feedback on it. It looks fabulous. It's a section of that that we're going to talk about today.

This podcast is going to be principally about the **Self-Publishing Formula Foundation**, which we've announced previously, but been a kind of soft launch in the background, and today we want to give it a lot more publicity and flesh it out.

I'm going to talk about exactly what that is, and it might be something that can change your career, the path of your career, possibly the path of your life, so quite exciting stuff. If you want to read along with this, obviously we'll have our show notes, but I'll just point out that there's a tab on our website, the aforementioned, nicely designed website, which is called SPF Foundation.

If you click on that, you can see some of the criteria and the detail that we're going to be talking about.

We're delighted, aren't we, Lucy, to announce that we are partnering with Reedsy for this foundation?

Lucy Dawson: Absolutely.

James Blatch: Yeah. They're going to be putting up a lot of resource that'll go the way of the foundation recipients. For that, we're going to switch

over, and in a few minutes I'm going to be talking to Ricardo Fayet at Reedsy, and not only just about the foundation, but I think we'll catch up with Ricardo as well.

Reedsy is such a powerful, dominant force in this area and always imagining and coming up with new ways of doing things and new ways of putting authors in touch with experts, and so we'll catch up with Ricardo cross the board with Reedsy.

Then at the end of the podcast, Lucy and I will talk in a little bit more detail about specifically if you're interested in applying for the foundation for position for the resources that are available, what steps you need to take.

Lucy, why don't we start with why? Why are we doing this?

Lucy Dawson: Yeah. Absolutely. The very easy answer to that is that we just want to give something back, but really, to be honest, there's a lot more behind that.

I really think that the foundation encapsulates the very essence of the ideology behind self-publishing as a whole. James, you probably actually had the genesis of the idea behind of the foundation, because I don't know whether you remember, on our first Self-Publishing Formula planning meeting that we had you put up a video. It was Casey Neistat.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Lucy Dawson: And that wonderful, wonderful video, "Do what you can't." That really, really got me thinking. We should connect to that video actually in the show notes. I mean, I love that. It's a really motivational and inspirational video. Although it principally applies to obviously Casey's world of YouTubers and creators, who basically he's saying, you know, "Just create. Do what you want to do you. You work hard at it, and you can be a success," but it applies 100% as well to self-publishing.

He talks very clearly about the old rules not applying anymore. YouTubers don't need to go to film school. They don't need to look a certain way.

It's exactly the same for authors. Authors don't need the old fashioned gatekeepers anymore. They don't need the publishers. They don't need the agents. They don't need the bookshops to make their careers.

The power really is in our hands now, in the self-publishing community. For me, that's exactly how it should be. Self-publishing, it's a beautiful, inspirational, liberating concept.

Who are publishers to tell you what you can and can't write, when you can publish, what your cover should look like. Authors, I mean, I live with one. Authors are creators, and you should create all of your business, and be proud of it, and own it, and wear it. Yeah. That's what Casey talks about, and it just applied so much to the self-publishing world.

For me, the foundation, it's just a simple extrapolation of that very basic concept. In an ideal world, if you can tell a great story, if you are talented in what you do, and if you can work really hard at it, you deserve to be a success.

It did not sit well with me and with Mark actually that some people, through no fault of their own, didn't have access to all of the help available in the self-publishing world.

Mark's courses are great value for money. You know? I think Ads is ... Was it \$750, which is \$2 a day for a year for lifetime access, but in some parts of the world, you know, \$2 might be a week's rent.

I've seen some of the queries come through on Zendesk before a time of the launch, when people have basically said, "Okay. I can either pay your

course, or I can pay my rent, or I will eat rice and beans for a year basically. What do you think I should do?"

Mark has obviously turned around previously and said, "Pay your bills. It's an insane question. Pay your bills. That's the most important thing," but really now this gives Mark a different answer, and that answer is, "Apply to the foundation."

The foundation is really just a great way to level that playing field, so that the most talented students, irrespective of income or where they are, these talented students can rise to the top. That really is the idea behind the foundation.

James Blatch: Yeah. That's great. Nice explanation. Thank you, Lucy. I think it's really exciting what we do generally.

I think Mark's courses are an enabling, empowering device for many people, and as you say, for a lot of people the investment in the course is not small, but for a lot of people, and we hear this in the testimonial interviews, a lot of them within weeks say, "It was nothing compared to what I got," but for others it's a huge step they can't do. Absolutely right to take that block away.

It's exciting watching people who can afford it invest and see their careers get turned around, their lives get turned around on occasion. What's going to be even more exciting for us I think is somebody who for them it was out of reach, and then to unleash their stories onto the public will be great.

We do quite a few things. This is probably the most prominent kind of giving back thing we do. I mean, Mark's about to start picking out some of our listeners and doing a DIY workshop for them.

It's going to be via the Patreon.com subscribers, and that's going to be a huge, valuable consultancy type thing for them, which we're doing,

because I think other people will learn from it. We do a few other things in the background as well. We always pick a charity after each launch, and Rise Africa we've done for the last two, which is a fantastic, little charity operating out of the UK in very poor parts of the world.

This is to the heart of what we do, about enabling writers to tell stories and find their readers.

Lucy Dawson: Absolutely. As I said, it's quite an idealistic concept. The Digital Age is wonderful. There are so few barriers. As I say, just to be able to really push that idea and take away any resisting barriers that might be, so we can really find some very talented people, that would help them change their lives.

James Blatch: Yeah. The headlines of the foundation is effectively it's a scholarship. I mean, that's what we're describing it I think as well, as a scholarship.

You will have lifetime access to both our courses. That's the Foundation 101 class and the Advanced Advertising for Authors course, which I guess is a combined value of approaching \$1,500, 13, \$1,400, something like that, off the top of my head. Then another couple of ... \$2,500 worth of resources to be spent at Reedsy.

Now, that's a really key part of this. We do see this from people who, again, there's a next tier up I guess of people who are saying, "I could afford your course, but then I couldn't afford to get my covers done, or I couldn't afford to get my formatting done professionally, my editing, and so on."

You can't do one. It would only be going half as far as we wanted to go by just giving access to the courses. We're delighted that Reedsy have come on board with this as well.

That \$2,500 will go a long way, spent wisely.

Lucy Dawson: Absolutely. For that, you should easily be able to get, you know, a round of editing, so like copy editing, a cover, any formatting or design work that you wanted doing.

It should be a cohesive package to get your first book up and running and really start to make it motor.

James Blatch: Great. Okay. Well, look, this seems like a great opportunity to go and talk to Ricardo at this stage. We're going to talk to him about their involvement in the foundation.

I'll get some advice from Ricardo, specifically on how he thinks that money should be spent as well and how best to make the most of it. He's always got a lot to say on those subjects.

We're also going to catch up with Reedsy and find out what they're doing and what their latest services are for authors, because that's always an interesting thing with them as well. Then you and I will come back. We'll give a bit more detail out about how to apply for the foundation.

Ricardo Fayet, welcome back to the SPF Podcast. You're a bit of an old hand at podcast, but normally we're sitting somewhere warm and sunny and meeting in person, aren't we?

Actually, do you know what? It's a nice day in England, isn't it?

Ricardo Fayet: Yeah. It's very nice. It's been three very nice days. Enjoy them.

James Blatch: You said them like there's been three. Listen. Count them. Three very nice days.

Ricardo Fayet: Oh. Well, I certainly count them. I certainly count them when they happen.

James Blatch: Yeah. Yeah. They're not that often. You are, as I've just mentioned to Lucy, a truly international human being. You're a global citizen, but you still decide to reside in what is quite often a quite gray and drizzly London.

Ricardo Fayet: I shall be moving out soon. Don't worry.

James Blatch: Where are you moving to?

Ricardo Fayet: Madrid.

James Blatch: Okay. On the Sun stakes, that definitely trumps London.

Ricardo Fayet: Exactly.

James Blatch: So, you're going to be based there for a bit?

Ricardo Fayet: Yeah. I'll probably work for Reedsy from there.

James Blatch: I guess Reedsy being online, a digital company, it doesn't particularly matter where you are in the world.

Ricardo Fayet: Exactly. I don't go there to develop the Spanish market. I wish, but I'll just work from there.

James Blatch: Okay. Well, look, we're going to talk about a couple of things. Lucy and I have already introduced the concept of the SPF Foundation, and we approached you about it, and you immediately said yes, which was fantastic. Thank you very much indeed for Reedsy playing their part.

Let me ask you why you would want to be a part of something like that?

Ricardo Fayet: Well, it's a good thing, right?

James Blatch: Yup. I think so.

Ricardo Fayet: Exactly. That's the main reason I think. I mean, we've been growing really well as a company for the past few years, so we're now in a place where we can start giving back a little bit, like you guys.

We've launched a scholarship this year for US students, and we're about to announce the scholarship winner.

When Mark approached me about the foundation, I thought it's perfectly in line with what we're trying to do now, and so yeah. It was perfect timing.

James Blatch: Lucy and I were just saying how exciting it is. It's exciting anyways seeing an author discover the world of self-publishing and the sort of things that Mark teaches to enable them to turn that into a commercial success.

Even more exciting to see somebody given a little hand at the beginning, because they perhaps couldn't quite stretch to some of the financial commitments, which are there at the beginning of any business, whatever it is, to see them then succeed.

It's an exciting prospect for all of us I think.

Ricardo Fayet: Absolutely. I mean, as a startup, we received money in the early days, because otherwise, we wouldn't be able to build what we built, so it makes sense to, now that we have some money, try to give it back to authors starting their journey.

James Blatch: Seed money. We should say we're not going to be taking a long term stake in any authors. It's entirely up to them to reap the rewards from their career, but I imagine that the people who initially invested in Reedsy would probably want to retain a stake and some of the profits as it grows.

Ricardo Fayet: Some of them did. Yeah. We also got a few grants without stakes.

James Blatch: Oh. Okay. Grants without stakes, like it.

Let's talk a little bit about Reedsy and what you're doing. We should probably, for anybody who missed your first couple of appearances on the podcast, which was some time ago now ... I think we've spoken to you twice before, both times at conferences.

Just give us the broad brush picture of what Reedsy does.

Ricardo Fayet: Broadly, Reedsy is a marketplace of publishing talent. If you're thinking editors, proofreaders, cover designers, children's books illustrators, book marketers, even publicists and ghostwriters, we have them on Reedsy.

The specificity is we really actively look and source the best talent, so all our professionals on Reedsy come from generally traditional publishing, often the big five, and if not, they've worked with best selling indie authors.

We try to make sure that the people we feature on our marketplace are highly curated, and we actually only accept around 3% of the people who apply to join Reedsy as a freelancer. It's a good place to find anyone you're missing in your publishing team.

James Blatch: Now, that process in itself is quite a tall order to manage, I'd imagine.

You've got to do a fair amount of assessment of an individual across a whole range of different disciplines.

Ricardo Fayet: Yeah. We've got to be more or less full time on that. In the beginning, I was doing it with Emmanuel, my co-founder, and we've developed a process that works pretty well, and it obviously depends on the discipline.

I personally have a chat with every marketer we add to the platform, because I know some things about book marketing, and I know what authors should be looking for in a book marketer.

This allows me to filter out the people who maybe have worked three, four years in a traditional publishing company, have done a lot of organizing, publicity campaigns, and billboard advertising, and all those things are not really going to work or are not even accessible to indie authors, so these people are not going to make sense in our marketplace.

By having a chat with them, I can fully understand whether that marketer is going to make sense for Reedsy or not.

For the other professions, we just look at the CV, their profile, and there's a lot of back and forth to make their profile really up to standard for adding it on our marketplace.

James Blatch: I think I may have mentioned this to you last time. It's really interesting to see how the market's changing, the whole publishing market's changing.

In your early days your applicants would have been all traditional publishing people working and perhaps being let go by traditional publishing as things change, and now you're getting people, really, really

strong editors and cover designers, who've grown up in the indie space, who don't work for the big five.

Ricardo Fayet: Absolutely. We're getting applications, for example, from an editor, who hasn't worked for traditional publishers. We're working with him to ready his profile. I think one of the best examples of that was Rebecca Hayman, one of her editors.

She actually worked with us to define the idea of Reedsy in the early days. She was fully freelance, never worked for a traditional publishing company, and was the number one editor on Upwork at the time. She quit Upwork, because it didn't really work for her anymore, and she was our first editor in Reedsy.

Now, she works for indie authors. She works for a bunch of agencies, literary agencies, as well. She works for traditional publishers. She does some ghost writing.

There's a lot of people who started this kind of freelance career in editing and design and who started working with indies, and then moved on to publishing companies, and now have a full portfolio of really, really interesting clients.

James Blatch: So, people can come to you to find the experts that they need for their career. You've mentioned a couple of the big ones. In terms of why people end up at Reedsy.

Is it mainly looking for an editor? Is that their first way in, or is it cover design? What's the main draw?

Ricardo Fayet: The main draw that we're seeing is editing definitely. We launched first with editing and design, so that's where we have the most resources and probably what we're best known for.

Then I think we have a lot of interest in marketing and publicity, and we recently added web design, and we're getting quite a few requests for that.

We're basically targeting authors at different stages in their career. I think a lot of people are still nowadays going into self-publishing for the first time, so we'll still get mostly requests for editors and designers.

As people move through the self-publishing journey, they're going to start looking maybe for a book marketer, once they've got a certain size of a list and they want to start automated sequences or kind of automate their marketing. They're going to work with a book marketer.

Then they're going to look for a website designer to redo their website, as Mark did recently, not through Reedsy though. We try to kind of accompany the author's journey as we go through our journey ourselves in Reedsy.

James Blatch: Just explain to me the book marketer.

Ricardo Fayet: That's a tough one.

James Blatch: Yeah. I mean, how long's a piece of string.

How much do they take on of an individual author's marketing effort?

Ricardo Fayet: It's tough to say. Generally, they will work with authors who've already grown a certain size of list. What they do is refine what the author's done, so create better automated sequences, do more segmentation in terms of the lists and more clever segmentation, and then try to add additional lead generation sources.

If the author is acquiring leads through Facebook ads and doing that successfully, maybe the book marketer's going to look at trying to replicate

that success through other channels, such as Amazon ads, or other things like that. That's what generally they do.

James Blatch: I was going to say how popular is it for people to have book marketers?

You've got to have a certain level of income as well to make that work.

Ricardo Fayet: Exactly. It's incredible popular in the sense that every author wants to have someone to do the marketing for them, or at least some part of it.

Then in terms of actual projects that happen, there aren't that many, because you need a certain level of an author and a certain financial commitment as well, because we vet our marketers, so they're really good, but they're also expensive. Relatively expensive. You need a certain profile of clients for that to work.

We obviously get less marketing projects than editing, but I get asked by authors all the time for marketing, so I try to provide as much education as I can through the blog, through recommending marketers obviously, through our Reedsy learning courses.

Once they've gone through this education process themselves and they think that it still needs someone to kind of coach them through it, then we want to have marketers there for that.

James Blatch: It is an interesting one. We also get asked a lot. Mark gets personally asked a lot too if he's available to run people's campaigns. As a company, we get asked if we can't do it, can we put them on to somebody that will run it for them?

Thinking this through, there's been a couple of people who've sort of put their hands up in the past, but it hasn't lasted very long. Thinking it through,

there's so much labor at the beginning, setting things up, it's almost a labor of love.

The reason it works as a self-publisher doing it yourself is that nobody's going to put the hours in for anybody else in the way that you put them in for yourself.

Outsourcing that, at the moment, it's a difficult thing. There's a lot of demand for it.

It's quite a difficult thing to see it actually happening in reality.

Ricardo Fayet: Absolutely. We have a few on Reedsy where it's a labor of love for them to market books. I kind of understand that, because I've been running some campaigns for a few authors here and there in spare time, and I really enjoyed it.

If I wasn't doing Reedsy, I'd probably be dabbling into that, but it's true that for most people, once they start taking on a few campaigns by other authors, they want to either launch their own course, which I never recommend them, or apply it to their own books, and so they start writing more, and they become more successful as an author.

The more successful they are, the less time they have for managing other author's campaigns. It's a tough one.

James Blatch: Yes. I will say what that looks like in the future, what the whole of this space looks like in the future.

Let's focus on the SPF Foundations again, Ricardo. We're talking about \$2,500 of spend on Reedsy.

Now, by definition, these are going to be authors who have probably not got a very mature marketing setup at this stage and actually may not have

been able to invest in some of the traditional things with books. I know it's difficult when we're not talking about a specific example.

What sort of advice would you give to a new author with one book self-published so far, who can obviously write, but hasn't been able to invest money in the past?

How are they going to make that \$2,500 really work for them?

Ricardo Fayet: I think probably getting that first book right. I think maybe five years ago I heard Mark Coker, the founder of Smashwords, say that if he had \$1,000 to invest in a book, he would invest it in editing. I think that's still relevant, if it's your first book.

For authors who have only that first book out there and haven't been able to really polish it and launch it as they wanted to, I think the first thing's to make sure that the book's as good as it can be, the concept of the book.

Then if you didn't have a professional cover done, then definitely invest in that, because it's the first thing that readers are going to see.

We're mostly talking about novels and fiction authors I think here, so probably invest in a series. That is how most fiction authors I know are making their money.

If you're going to invest these \$2,500 into something, make sure that it's something that can make you money in the long run, so probably invest in a series. You can use the same cover designer for the first five or for the whole series actually. You should use the same cover designer for the whole series, so you can get kind of discounts with a designer, if it's for more than one cover obviously.

I'd say make sure your first book is as good as it can be editorially. Write the series, and then get covers and branding throughout the series by a professional cover designer.

That shouldn't eat up the whole budget. Then you'll be able to see where you need extra help. If it's copyediting and proof reading, because you're prone to making a lot of grammatical errors. If it's more design, because you're running a lot of ads and need different creatives. If it's marketing, because you educated yourself about marketing, but you need a book marketer to set up the first campaigns and teach you how to segment your lists and how to find a couple of channels for lead generation that work for you.

It will depend on each project, but I think editing and design are definitely the bases that everyone needs to have covered.

James Blatch: The initial focus very much on the product itself, making it as excellent as it possibly can be. That obviously makes sense.

Ricardo Fayet: Yeah. Otherwise, you're just going to waste marketing money. If you run Facebook ads and the cover is not appealing to the right genre, you're either going to get bad readers, or you're going to get very low click through rates, so very high costs for each ad you're running.

As long as your product's not the best it can be, you're just going to lose money on the marketing side of things.

James Blatch: Yeah. Great. Thank you.

Ricardo. In terms of Reedsy's growth, how many years is it now since you and Emmanuel dreamt up this idea?

Ricardo Fayet: We started, we launched officially in November 2014, so it's been exactly three years now.

James Blatch: Three years this month, and you're a team of how many now?

Ricardo Fayet: We're 15 in the company.

James Blatch: That's quite something. Spread all over Europe or the world probably?

Ricardo Fayet: Spread all over the world. We have two people in the US, one in Canada, and otherwise, about everywhere in Europe, Portugal, Poland, Sweden, and obviously a few people in the UK.

James Blatch: Yeah. And soon to be Madrid.

Ricardo Fayet: Exactly.

James Blatch: Your portal, so people can go to ... It's Reedsy.com, isn't it? Before I say .co.uk. I think it's .com.

Ricardo Fayet: It's all .com. Yeah.

James Blatch: All .com.

Ricardo Fayet: [crosstalk 00:29:02] in two other sub domains.

James Blatch: Okay. It's R-double E-D-S-Y, Reedsy.

Ricardo Fayet: Exactly. Yeah. R-E-E-D-S-Y.com.

James Blatch: We've had the discussion before about the origin of the name, so we'll leave that there. That's where people can go online, and I think people will be familiar with the concept that you're doing here, because this is not a novel concept, excuse the pun.

This is basically matching up people with be it tradesmen, be it a recruitment consultant's location, but it's operating in a very fast, expanding world of self-publishing, and you've got this mix of people coming out of traditional publishing, because clearly there's going to be a contraction there, and this explosion of self-publishing.

It seems to me you're in the right place. It must feel like that in terms of your growth.

Ricardo Fayet: Yeah. It does. We're certainly in a good place. More than the growth, the feedback we get from authors, like you do, has been absolutely overwhelming.

We probably help authors launch their careers and help them make money from an activity they've been considering a hobby thus far. We help often at a sooner stage, so we get emails from authors thanking us for basically making it able for them to publish a very professional book.

As long as we keep getting good feedback from authors, I think it's going to be a good sign.

James Blatch: Yeah. Great. Ricardo, thank you very much indeed for joining us from a sunny London, we should say, third day in a row. Not a record for 2017, but certainly something to be remarked on.

I think also I think I'm right in saying you do something for us at launch time for students coming onto the 101 course and ads. I think we do a code or something.

Ricardo Fayet: Yeah. I think we have a module on book formatting, because we've got a free formatting tool, similar to Templates, that is free. We have a video in there as part of the Self-Publishing 101 course.

James Blatch: Yeah. It's a little helping hand there, if you're not springing for professional formatting. A lot of people do do their own formatting.

Some people do it because they are very finicky about it, and they want it to be absolutely excellent. Your product is one of those that allows you to completely take control of what your book's going to look like.

Ricardo Fayet: Exactly.

James Blatch: Great. Ricardo, thank you so much indeed. I'll probably see you somewhere sunny in the future. We'll perhaps come to Madrid next time.

Ricardo Fayet: Well, I hope so. You're welcome any time after January 2018.

James Blatch: That sounds like a perfect time to go. We'll see you no doubt at a conference soon. Thanks for joining us.

Ricardo Fayet: Absolutely. Thank you, James.

James Blatch: There's Ricardo. We've all met Ricardo, I've met him several times. He always pops up in conferences, so I met him in Florida actually a few weeks ago, the London Book Fair for the last couple of years. I think he might have been at Florida the year before as well, and you bumped into him in Italy.

Lucy Dawson: I did. Yes. It was the first time actually that I've tagged along to one of Mark's events, where he's been speaking. I sat next to Ricardo. We got on really, really well.

He's got a wonderful entrepreneurial business brain. All the Reedsy guys do. He's obviously insanely clever, so speaks five languages, et cetera. He's

genuinely one of the most personable, friendly, down to Earth guys you'd like to me, so I have an infinite amount of time for Ricardo.

James Blatch: Yeah. He's a great guy. I think we've mentioned in our interviews before with him that he's a truly international individual, with having been brought up across Europe, schooled in one country, parented in others countries, lived in other countries.

He almost makes a nonsense of the whole idea of countries, Ricardo. He just operates as a global citizen, as we all should.

Lucy Dawson: He does. Yeah.

James Blatch: Wouldn't life be less complicated if we had that? It's getting very John Lennon-ish.

Lucy, let's move on to some of the detail then, before we wrap things up on the foundation.

We've set up some criteria, haven't we, as to what we're looking for in terms of applicants.

Lucy Dawson: Yeah. Absolutely. As we said, it's really to help level the playing field and to help those that potentially don't have the financial means of others.

So the first criteria being that there should be an **annual personal income of less than \$30,000 US** per annum, so, really to make sure that we are offering the scholarship to the right people.

People need to have **written and self-published at least one book**, whether fiction or nonfiction.

We need to make sure also that the scholarship is going to ... Let's be blunt. We want people to be great writers, so we want the best to rise to the top. We want **at least 10 five star reviews on Amazon**, which will show that the writing is of a good quality.

Whoever wins must be willing to complete and implement both courses in full, so that's both the 101 and the Ads For Authors course. Quite often you can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink, but we need the people to actually do the work in order to see what the results are going to be.

These people need to be ambassadors not just for SPF, but also self-publishing as a whole, so they need to be happy to be interviewed on the podcast, be involved in some of the publicity required.

That'd be great to do some testimonials with them or similar, but someone who's happy to talk on the record about their experiences with the course and with self-publishing as a whole.

We're also asking for applicants to **have a sponsor within the SPF community**, someone who's taken one of the courses. We've had questions before, so I've had a couple of queries about, "Is that important?", and, "Can I apply without a sponsor?", but we do need that to be in place for two reasons really.

First of all, a sponsor who's done the courses before knows what's involved, so they will know whether the person applying is able to do it and will get a good result by doing it.

The second is because we want the winners to be good ambassadors, and to be a good ambassador you have to be able to network and to engage, and to influence. If people don't know other people in the Self-Publishing Formula community, it's difficult for them to do that. If you want to apply and you don't currently have a sponsor, get involved in the groups. Start

commenting. Start making friends. Start being a natural networker. Get yourself a sponsor, because that will show us that you're able to fulfill that ambassadorial role that all the winners need to do.

James Blatch: Okay. That sounds good. Thank you.

The way this is going to work in terms of timetable ...

Lucy Dawson: Every year there will be four winners. Those winners will be drawn in January of 2018. Before then, if we just rewind a little bit, so the winners will be announced in January 2018.

We really need all applicants to be in mid-December, because in mid-December, exact date TBC, but mid-December, that's when we're going to start short listing people. We'll have had everyone's information. We can contact all the sponsors.

Again, really important, make sure the sponsor's aware and also make sure that they fulfill the criteria with regards to annual income. We need that little bit of time to do the background checks and work before we then announce the winners in January.

James Blatch: In addition to putting in obviously your name, your book titles, the five star review numbers, et cetera, all that stuff that you ask for, there's a panel there, "Why do you deserve the scholarship?" What are you expecting to see there, or what should people use that for?

It's a tough question.

Lucy Dawson: Well, it is. It is a tough question, but really, this is free space. You need to sell yourself. You need to say why you deserve it.

It's also, to be honest, a chance to show that you can write. Spend some time on it. Make it eloquent, but sell yourself. This is not a time to be humble.

James Blatch: Well, this is an exciting adventure for us, Lucy. Well done for getting it from that early kernel of an idea in the room next to where you're sitting now to something that's a living and breathing project for us.

I should say it's been a soft launch, and we have had some applicants already, but obviously we're looking for more really by that cutoff, sort of mid-December.

Lucy Dawson: Yeah. Absolutely. I think this episode is due to go out towards the end of November, so people will still have maybe three weeks, maybe a month in order to make sure that they get their applications in, get their sponsor on board, and to apply. I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone's applications. I think it will be great.

James Blatch: Yeah. The website is the place to go, SelfPublishingFormula.com. There's a tab on the top right, which is marked, "SPF Foundation."

You can just put `/SPF-Foundation` at the end of the website and go straight there, but why would you not want to view our beautiful website in all its glory and go through it?

Lucy Dawson: Yeah. Do.

James Blatch: It's perfectly seamless navigation. Good. That's brilliant. Thank you very much indeed, Lucy.

Have you enjoyed your first little foray onto the podcast?

Lucy Dawson: Yeah. I have. It's been fun, my first tentative step into the public life.

James Blatch: Into broadcasting.

Lucy Dawson: I'm not going to apply for your job, James. I think you're very, very safe.

James Blatch: Mark should be worried. I think you've been very eloquent and very good, so we appreciate it. Thank you very much. We should say thank you to Ricardo.

Don't forget, you can become a VIP listener of the podcast if you go to Patreon.com/SPFPodcast. In fact, **that's another way of getting the course, because we gave one course away at each launch to one of our gold Patreon subscribers.**

Also, we're going to be choosing somebody soon who in fact possibly, probably around the time this gets broadcast, we are going to be picking out one of the gold subscribers to get a full DIY, MOT we call it in the UK. I don't know what you call it when you take your vehicle in in America to get it looked at once a year. Service I suppose is the generic expression, but an under the hood examination of what you're doing marketing-wise, how your covers are looking, what your blurb's like, try and find the resistance points, the points that are stopping you finding more readers and selling more books, a sort of general health check.

Lucy Dawson: It's a great idea. Mark's really excited actually to start getting into some of the detail. Because he gets some requests that he's just unable to do. This is a great way to be able to get professionals to give everything a once over, as you said, in MOT fashion.

James Blatch: We get lots of emails. We have to say we get lots of emails this day and age. We're a quite big organization, and some of them are more eccentric than others.

We did have a one-liner this morning that said, "I have a book the world needs to hear. I need your help urgently. Please advise. We need to move quickly."

I'm thinking, "Okay. Probably not going to be able to hand-hold you through the process of self-publishing, but listen to the podcast," is what I said.

Lucy Dawson: Yeah. It's difficult to reply to everyone, isn't it?

James Blatch: Yeah.

Lucy Dawson: We try our best, but it's difficult to apply to everyone.

James Blatch: Yeah. Everyone gets a reply of some sort nearly always. Lucy, thank you very much indeed. Give Mark my regards when you see him.

Lucy Dawson: Thank you.

James Blatch: We'll be back next week. Have a great week writing and a great week selling.

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