

## **EPISODE 114: GETTING TWITTER TO FLY FOR AUTHORS - WITH IAN SUTHERLAND**

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

James Blatch: Hello and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula podcast with Mark and James. So this is going out on Friday, the 13th of April, which means that we have just spent the week at the London Book Fair.

Obviously because we're recording this in the past, I can't tell you what it was like. But I'm sure it was amazing.

Mark Dawson: I predict I will be tired because I would have had three days of talking to people. I would have probably had a hangover from the SPF party and other parties I might have gone to.

I'll be ready for the weekend. So that's me. I'm predicting that now. I'm fairly confident that'll be an accurate prediction.

James Blatch: Yes, I'll be tired as well. But actually, as this podcast goes out, I shall be in the air flying to Turin to go skiing for a few days because there's been ... The world's amount of snow has fallen in the Alps this years and I can't resist going out there to get some of that action.

Mark Dawson: Very good, yeah. Well, I would love to join you. But the kids are a bit too young for skiing right now. Give it a couple of years and we will be up there too.

James Blatch: On the slopes. I'd recommend it.

What we're gonna do, actually, at London Book fair, we're gonna try and record a few of the interviews for the next couple of episodes.

That's probably Reader Links, which is John Logsdon's platform, which is an information data analysis thing. He explains it better than I do and Jasper Joffrey, which is an interview I've already previewed. We'll probably introduce that from London Book Fair as well.

In fact, that would be a perfect podcast episode to talk about in the context of London Book Fair. So they're coming up in the next couple of week. This episode, as previewed last week is about Twitter.

Now Twitter has had a bit of a rollercoaster existence in life, generally, let alone just for this author market in terms of what it does and who it's useful for. So we had Twitter ads in the early days.

We were among the people making Twitter ads work. It was hard work. But then they started changing things. They took away their lead cards and things like that. It just took the edge away and it became not profitable.

Actually, it wasn't even profitable for our courses, which are high value items, let alone books you're gonna sell for a few dollars. However, that didn't mean that organically, they weren't important.

But lot of people don't really know how to use Twitter. They don't know how often they should be posting and what they should be posting. But we do have a guru on hand. We have a man, Ian Sutherland who's written books on the subject, who keeps up with it, who runs Twitter accounts for authors, including you, Mark.

He has an author platform called Author Sidekick Platform and there's gonna be a discount code for that at the end of this episode. But we've got Ian back because there have been quite a few changes recently since we last spoke to him and this is really an update and an instructional guide to how you can make Twitter work for you. So let's hear from Ian.

Ian Sutherland, our Twitter guru. Here you are, back again on the Self Publishing Formula podcast and as we'll get onto in a moment, one of the reasons you're back is because Twitter never stopped ruining everyone's lives by changing things and things no longer work and we need to catch up on all of that.

**But first of all, Ian, welcome back and let's just remind everyone who you are because you are, in fact, an author yourself, aren't you?**

Ian Sutherland: I am, indeed. Thanks for having me back.

I'm a thriller author. I write a series of novels with a character called Brody Taylor and I guess the thing that's different for me is I do cyber crime, a modern day cyber crime set in the context of more accessible police procedural, murder mysteries and I have a lot of fun with that because it's also very modern and I get to play with these global conspiracies, which is pretty cool. So yeah, that's what I write and they're well received and I enjoy it.

James Blatch: Yeah, that's a big area and at some point, you can reinvent yourself as a consultant to go into corporations because they're all scared to death of cyber crime and don't know what they're doing.

Ian Sutherland: Absolutely.

James Blatch: Yeah. Okay, so Twitter. You got into this. You've published a book on this subject and the book's still available and I think you must have to do a fair amount of revising it.

**But it's still pretty up to date?**

Ian Sutherland: I released a book called Advanced Twitter Strategies for Authors about two and a half years ago. All of the techniques are pretty much up to date still. I haven't revised it.

I am getting close to needing to. Some of the tools I recommend within it I would no longer recommend. In fact, one chapter, I have a replacement chapter already written, which I give to people that join the mailing list so that they can change the tool that was recommended at the time.

But yeah, the techniques and the principles are fine. But Twitter does change things. That's for sure.

James Blatch: Yes, it does, doesn't it? I think one of the things about Twitter is that whilst authors look at Facebook and they understand more or less what they should be doing, even if some of the details are not there, I think Twitter is more of an unknown area for people.

They kind of roughly know how it works, but not sure what they should be doing as authors to make it work for them and drive sales and that's really where you've knuckled down and come up with some workflows.

**Shall we remind ourselves what you said last time you were on that no longer works? This is probably a good point.**

Ian Sutherland: Yeah, sure. So the thing about Twitter for authors, particularly if you're trying to get the word out about your books and why it's different from Facebook and other areas is the half life of a Tweet can be measured in hours, maybe if you're lucky, but certainly minutes or seconds.

So when you post something, it'll be no longer relevant and appear within 30 minutes or an hour.

Twitter has made some changes so that it's tinkered with your feed. So it has an algorithm to work out what it populates there. It used to be reversed chronological and that's improved things a little bit for people who are already engaged with you.

But because of this short timeline, the thing that most people can't figure out is how to build a brand around Twitter and there's only one answer and the answer is pretty simple. You need to tweet a lot and by tweeting a lot, you get to put your content out there. You have more chance of it being seen by other people, other readers and so on.

The downside of that is it takes time and that's where the techniques that I first wrote about in the book come into their own because we're using tools to schedule them. We're connecting to our website and other people's websites so that we're automatically posting content and we're filling the stuff that we're posting. We're doing as much as possible to add value and make things interesting.

So it's not just promotional in nature and when you do that, roughly, it's the classic 80/20 rule. If 80% of what you're tweeting is non-promotional in nature, then it kind of gives you a license to tweet the other 20% as promotional stuff with links to your books or your books on Amazon or whatever and that's the approach I take. But the two together allow you to kind of extend and build your author brand and that's how you do it.

James Blatch: Okay. Now there were some specific techniques we talked about last time and you actually did a module that went into our Ads for Authors course, which lived and breathed for about nine months and then Twitter ruined everything again, same as they did with my Twitter ads module, which again, we've withdrawn, not because the techniques don't

work. But they're just not good value for money. Let's get that out of the way, actually, first.

Ian Sutherland: Okay.

James Blatch: Let's talk about the paid ads platform because there is confusion here.

Paid ads don't work for authors, as far as we concerned, and we've tested them extensively with several thousand dollars down that particular drainpipe. They did for awhile and then Twitter made some changes.

Recently, Twitter have come up with a sort of automated paid ads options, a product for people and I punted this along.

**I know you've had a good, deep dive into that and the headline is a pretty similar headline, right?**

Ian Sutherland: It is, yeah. So Twitter ads, which you looked at personally, the conclusion now is it's just not economical. I think if you're a big brand promoting cars or something really expensive in nature, then building a brand through Twitter advertising can work or you.

But when we're selling books, which are relatively low priced, even in boxes sets, the economics don't work.

Twitter has released something called Twitter Promote Mode to make things easier for people and it's a monthly subscription, \$99, 79 pounds in the UK and for that, you kind of 10 tweets it finds that pass as quality criteria that you post each day.

It will then automatically take and promote through their advertising module and push those out to people and you can define your targeting not very well. The most you can do on this is, for us, would be books and

literature. So these tweets would then go out to people who are interested in that kind of thing and it will expand your reach. It absolutely will.

They claim around 30,000 people will see your content and you'll get around 30 followers a month.

But at \$99 month, I just don't see that as very economical and so certainly not a good use of money when you got other options, like AMS ads or Facebook ads that you could plan that money into.

James Blatch: Yeah and we know from the other advertising platforms, YouTube, from Facebook ads, in particular that the devil is in the detail in that targeting and it's very easy.

Platforms will always take your money and if you don't get that targeting right and it does take experience and money at the beginning to try and get there and you work hard and eventually you get it working, hopefully.

**This new Twitter ads product takes all that away. It doesn't even give you an option of targeting properly.**

Ian Sutherland: Correct. You're limited at a category level. There's about 15 categories and they cover everything from cooking and sports and books and literature is the nearest we can get exposure.

James Blatch: It'd be all right for the traditional industry, the big traditional publishers because as Mark and I always laugh and on Facebook ads, you can click in the top right kind of. You can see why you've been targeted and I always remember one that was a Nick Cohen book and it said because I was a male in the UK.

Ian Sutherland: Nice. That's good targeting.

James Blatch: They've really drilled down on that one, picked me out for that. I do quite like Nick Cohen anyway.

Okay, so paid ads, well just shunt to one side and the advice from SPF and from you as a Twitter guru at the moment is not economically viable for authors as it stands.

So we're back into the organic realms then and there were lots of little tricks and tips that you gave us.

**You did a brilliant cheat sheet last time, the welcome tweet and so on and individually, quite a few of these now are either prohibited or just not working.**

Ian Sutherland: Yeah. The welcome tweet approach, which we talked about on the last time we interviewed and then I did build a course around it for SPF, was around building a mailing list, which is something we all the value of a mailing list.

The idea was that when someone follows you, that you hit them with a welcome tweet in the specific format using what's called a Twitter card and then someone would click on it and then they join your mailing list in return for a free book, that kind of thing and it was a great technique.

I've personally built my own mailing list over the last two years in the tens of thousands using this approach. The way you get so many people is obviously by following a lot of people and then getting a lot of followers in return.

That, Twitter didn't like. They removed the capability to do the welcome tweet. They never had it themselves. It was a third party vendors on top who were providing apps to do this kind of thing and Twitter changed the rules and removed the capability to do any form of welcome tweet.



You can still do a welcome direct message. But that's pretty useless. Most people don't even look at their direct messages. So I don't recommend it. So the welcome tweet went and we can no longer build our mailing list in that way and it's just done.

James Blatch: That was a shame, wasn't it? I agree with you about the welcome direct message. There's something also a little bit intrusive about the welcome direct message and impersonal.

Ian Sutherland: Yeah,

James Blatch: The tweet, you expect it to be a bit impersonal because Twitter is broadcasting to an audience. The direct message, if it's not one on one, I would say don't bother.

Ian Sutherland: And nearly all of them are automated. I think 99 out of 100 of the ones that I receive are all automated and if they're all automated, you turn off from all of them.

James Blatch: Yes. Exactly. Okay, so well done, Twitter. I mean, we should extend some sympathy to the organization and I think they have a platform. It's actually quite fun. I enjoy it.

It's black and white, Twitter, isn't it? A lot of my friends just don't do it, don't want to do it and other friends, it's the only one they really spend their time on. I actually really like it.

I like it for news gathering. I like it to see opinions, follow my sort of particular areas and it's just that translation into a commercially useful tool that I think, to be fair, they are struggling with. They've created a platform that people enjoy using but not one that lends itself to a big money making platform for them or for their customers.

Ian Sutherland: Yeah, I agree. Actually, Twitter just this quarter, just this month posted their first ever profit.

James Blatch: Oh, wow. They have made a profit.

Ian Sutherland: It's turning around for them and now it's coming through two main changes they think.

One is the way they have been changing their advertising platform and then secondly, the algorithm changes on your timeline.

People are becoming more engaged on Twitter, which is good to hear because we're all worried it would disappear or would just be about Donald Trump and now if they're making a profit, it gives me more confidence that the platform's here to stay and it becomes more viable and useful for authors.

James Blatch: Yeah, okay, well that's really interesting. I hadn't clocked that they'd finally turned that particular quarter. That's promising.

**Is there anything else we need to talk about that's no longer working that you spoke about last time?**

Ian Sutherland: The only thing I would say and it was a chapter in the book and if I was revising, creating a second edition of the book now, I would remove the chapter completely and that was the ability to do automated retweeting.

There's a couple of third party apps out there that you can subscribe to that will allow you to automatically retweet other people's content based on filters, whether that's hashtags or who they are or members of a list.

While it's technically still possible to do, Twitter's really clamping down on that level of automation and locking people's accounts and the last thing

you want to do is have your account locked. So I don't recommend that approach anymore. I certainly turned it off all of my accounts.

James Blatch: Okay. I'm trying to think the uses for that because sometimes, you go to the conference or an event and they'll have a big screen up and if you tweet on a hashtag, it appears on the big screen, which is always slightly dangerous, by the way, if it's completely automated some rogue in the room. But I guess what Twitter wants is for that to be moderated.

Ian Sutherland: Absolutely. Yeah, they want engagement and engagement doesn't happen by robots doing it. It only happens by people doing it and that's why they're banning these forms of automation.

So it doesn't help in terms of you getting the word out with the least effort. But at least that means that people are engaging more, which is back to why they're making money again.

James Blatch: Yeah, okay. The robots will be engaging one day.

Ian Sutherland: The robots will talk to the robots and write the books for us.

James Blatch: I've seen Steven Spielberg's AI. It will get there.

### **Before we move onto what is working, is Twitter still a viable platform that authors should be on?**

Ian Sutherland: They should absolutely be on it. But my only caution is it should be supplementary to everything else.

In terms of book marketing, it should be supplementary. It's never gonna be the platform that you can use in any form to hit the bestseller lists, that's for sure. You'll sell additional copies.

But for me, it's much more and still very useful as building yourself as a brand authority because you can tweet a lot. People can look at your profile, discover you and you will be perceived as a brand authority if you are tweeting consistently and regular around particular subjects.

If you're writing nonfiction books on gardening and you're tweeting about gardening, other websites and so on, then you'll see you're building your brand authority.

If you're a fictional author in the romance genre and you're tweeting about romance novels or news in the romance fiction industry and so on, then you're building your brand authority and I think it's a really great way for authors to reinforce themselves and their author brand by doing that and you do that.

There's ways to do it using some level of automation, but that's really the main use of it. Obviously, you do get incremental book sales, of course. But it doesn't really compare with what you can achieve with advertising on Facebook and book pub and AMS.

James Blatch: Okay, so for people who are feeling a bit overwhelmed when they start up and they get everything set up, Twitter's probably the last platform they should go to.

**But once they have got themselves established and they're looking for new channels, this is a channel that is definitely worth exploring and being on.**

Ian Sutherland: I would say that people should get to the Twitter earlier than the last ... From the point of view of return on investment and time, then yes. But it's also the place that people go to first to check you out quite often.

I would say make sure you've got a good Twitter profile, good page, good graphics and that you've got some content that you tweeted and you tweet on a regular basis and if you do the minimum, then you've got that covered and then you can come back later, once you've got all the advertising options sorted out and start building your brand authority as I described.

James Blatch: Some people might be worried about exposing themselves on Twitter not having a very large following and that putting people off if you, say, they have a look at you on Amazon and then they go on Twitter and check and got 94 followers. They might think negatively about you.

Ian Sutherland: Well, you gotta start somewhere.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Ian Sutherland: So the sooner you start, the sooner you can start building your follower base. That rules doesn't change. That's something that still works.

Twitter, you can still use these organic techniques to build your following, okay? We talked last time about how you do that and putting everything else to one side. There's lot of stuff you can do.

But the number one thing that you can do to attract more followers is to follow people in the first place. So if you target people who are following other authors in your genre and follow them, then there's a kind of unwritten etiquette where people will, in most cases follow back and then you can quite quickly grow your following up to a few thousand people, which kind of gives you some credibility.

James Blatch: Yeah, great.

## **So what is working?**

Ian Sutherland: So that etiquette still exists, thank God. So you can grow your follower base and I'm in the over 100, whatever it is. 120,000 on my fiction author account now and that's still working really, really well.

The 80/20 rule, which we talked about earlier, is still working. So the ability to schedule tweets, post tweets, use tools to link to RSS feeds of websites and pass it through.

If we refer back to the previous video, then people can find a giveaway from that, which talks about all of these techniques.

The new thing I think that's really starting to come through is collaboration on Twitter. We talk a lot about collaboration. We talked about insta-freebie giveaways and how you can use it to build your mailing list.

But the thing I'm starting to see more of and I'm part of with Author Platform Sidekick is helping authors collaborate with each other on Twitter or on social media platforms. So I'm seeing more of that now and I think that's really useful because self promotion you can do. But it looks like self promotion no matter how you dress it up.

When you talk about your own book, that is you self promoting, even if you're doing it overall in moderation, you're self promoting. So the idea here is, well, what if someone else tweets about your book for you on your behalf and in return you tweet about their book? So there's ways of doing that.

We've built something with Author Platform Sidekick to do that called Team Up, which works. There's other apps out there. I've looked at Triber, which is more for people who are blogging. But it allows you to, as you write new blog posts, then if you're part of a tribe, then those people will automatically share it out on their social media channels. So that's one way of collaborating.

And then there's another one I've discovered more recently called Creator Collabs and this one allows you to view tweets that other people have posted and then you can then share it and each time you share, depending on the number of followers you have, you then get credits and then other people will share your content that you make available. So it works and there's a free service there.

Not that many authors using it. But it's a good way of getting the word out about yourself or your books without being seen to be self promotional and that's why Team Up exists in Author Platform Sidekick. It's just specifically for authors.

So you set it all up. You load up a few tweets and then other authors in your genre, I've made it very genre specific because you don't want to be a children's author posting erotica, for example, or something like that.

Other authors in your genre will then automatically post your content and in return, you'll automatically post their content and you set it up once and it just runs on autopilot day after day, day after day and that's the new thing that we've launched with Author Platform Sidekick.

This idea of collaboration on Twitter I think is a really good way to help you avoid appearing to self promote but still getting the word out in a cool way.

James Blatch: You've mentioned Author Platform Sidekick. So let's flesh that out a little bit. So this is your own business.

**This is your own venture and it's a subscription service that does a lot of the heavy lifting on Twitter for authors.**

Ian Sutherland: Yeah, so some of these techniques I talked about, connecting to RSS feeds and having them automatically post through your Twitter account, setting up a queue of content of your old blog posts so they're just drip feeds on a regular basis and cycles through, setting up a

queue of promotional tweets that we still want to get the word out, self promote and have those cycle through and you control all the rates.

These are all the techniques that I describe in the book and told you in the book how to do it yourself. But there are still lots of people who either don't have the time or feel maybe technically challenged.

So the service is something I provide through Author Platform Sidekick to do all of those things and then the new feature of this is Team Up. So this is the ability to load up those tweets that other people in your genre will post in return for you posting the tweets and there's a free plan available for that.

Anyone who's interested in trying that out, you get to have two tweets posted by other authors in your genre every week, week after week as long as you're on the free plan and in return, you are posting other authors in your genre and the tweets are designed to be deliberately non-salesy.

It looks like content that you would naturally have promoted or naturally have posted, very deliberate on that side.

That's what Author Platform Sidekick is about. It's about taking everything I talked about in the book but providing it and doing it as a service for other authors.

James Blatch: We should talk about the subscription prices. We should also say that one of your customers is Mark Dawson. We'll talk Twitter him about it in a second. But I think he's been a pretty happy customer from the early days.

### **How much can people expect to pay for Author Platform Sidekick?**

Ian Sutherland: There's a free plan on the Team Ups. So that's completely free and it just runs week after week, day after day, week after week and



then if you wanna have more tweets posted every week by other authors, then there's two plans.

One is \$4.49 a month and the other one is 7.99 and for that, you get either seven tweets a week or 14 tweets a week. So one a day or two a day by other authors.

That's the Team Up and then it goes onto the engager module where it's \$25 from memory and that gives you the RSS feed in the Evergreen, so the non-promotional content, the stuff to build yourself as a brand authority and then the last piece is for \$35 a month, which is the marketing queue, when you've got scheduled promotions, all the promotional stuff that you might want to do.

All are running on autopilot. So that's the service. People use other tools. People use Buffer to schedule content. The problem is you always have to keep filling the queue again. This does it automatically. People use Meet Edgar. But Meet Edgar is \$49 a month.

It's quite expensive for what it is. So other tools are available. But the Sidekick service is purely geared to authors. There's loads of hashtags that authors use in all the forms to help you kind of get the most out of it. So it works pretty well. But just remember, there's a free service as well just for people to try it out.

**James Blatch: To get into that and that collaboration side of it and I think you're gonna offer a discount to our listeners.**

Ian Sutherland: I am. So there's a landing page that we've got for you here and for that, if you do take any of the paid plans, obviously you can't discount a free one, but any of the paid plans, there's a 15% discount available month by month.

James Blatch: Okay, so if we call that [selfpublishingformula.com/](http://selfpublishingformula.com/) ...

Ian Sutherland: Author ... No. Sidekick. How about sidekick?

James Blatch: Sidekick. There you go. Sidekick.

[Selfpublishingformula.com/sidekick](https://selfpublishingformula.com/sidekick). That was a dramatic pause, wasn't it where I suddenly realized that Author Platform Sidekick was too long and author had probably been used and my mind wasn't fast enough. But you saved us. Slash sidekick. There you go.

That will be the landing page for that and you can get that discount code. We'll punt you over to Ian's.

I suppose it's good that Twitter are now making a profit and you still feel there's some vibrancy there and some worth there.

**But it's always going to be a platform that does require some inside knowledge to get something out of it, right?**

Ian Sutherland: That's true and it's one that just takes time for not really the same return that you can get through other platforms. So I think it's supplementary to everything.

It's important because people expect you to be on there. People expect authors to be on there. Any form of celebrity, if we can call ourselves that, needs to be on Twitter and so you just need to make it work for you in the best way. You get problems like if you get too many followers. Then your tweet stream suddenly becomes too crazy to even read.

But you can use Tweet Deck, which is a Twitter tool to help filter that down. So even if you get carried away with this and you end up with tens of hundreds of thousands of followers, you can still make it intimate, which is, I think, the cool thing about Twitter.

You can still engage with people. People can still reach out to you without having to have a connection first. That's why it's so popular because you don't have to be friends first. People can just reach out to you.

I think there's always gonna be a role for Twitter and now they 280 characters. We can even say a few more things. But I see it as supplementary to everything else. That's for sure.

James Blatch: It's funny how the language of Twitter has entered everyday language, a bit like how almost everything in baseball is a metaphor or phrase in American ... all our language, everything from what happens between a boy and a girl at the high school prom, what base they get to, through to scoring a hitting it out of the park, etc.

I think Twitter is that version of social media. I think it's the go to. People talk about hashtags. They talk about 140 characters and so on and more than Facebook actually. It's referred to every day and people talk political terms.

### **It's almost like the big political platform isn't it? The discourse platform.**

Ian Sutherland: It is. It's the place where news breaks first. That's for sure. The trends are there. Anytime you log onto your Twitter homepage, you can see what's trending and they do that globally and in your local area. It's where news breaks first. It's where you can engage immediately.

I think it's more immediate than the other platforms.

### **James Blatch: Yes and the President of the United States is quite a keen tweeter, isn't he?**

Ian Sutherland: He is. I don't recommend his marketing strategy. But then again, he's already got the job he wants, I guess.

James Blatch: Yes. He has a unique way of promoting his personality through Twitter. Okay.

Ian Sutherland: I don't recommend that as an approach. But you can be controversial, I suppose, on Twitter and get away with it.

James Blatch: It does go to underline the fact that the platform is very high profile.

Ian Sutherland: Indeed. Indeed.

James Blatch: Yeah. Okay, so have we missed anything in terms of what people should be doing?

Ian Sutherland: No, I think so, James. I think we've covered what doesn't work, what's working now and I think collaboration is the hot area now.

James Blatch: Yeah. Definitely. So that sounds a really good thing and as you say, there's some of the key thing to follow, to make sure you're collaborating within your genre or maybe a little bit wider than if you've got a niche on a little bit wider than that, but something that your readers are likely to be interested in, otherwise, that probably won't work.

Ian Sutherland: Absolutely.

James Blatch: And your free platform is a great way to start with that.

Ian Sutherland: It is indeed. It is and so if you head over to the landing page, you'll see it there.

James Blatch: Yeah, we'll send you over there. Brilliant. Ian, thank you so much indeed for joining us. We had a technically fraught interview, which doesn't happen very often. But I'm so pleased it happened with you

because you're a friend and you always understand IT. Sometimes, I've got someone who's very nervous on the other end of the line and if my camera starts, everything's failed.

Ian Sutherland: Cyber crime without knowing anything about IT, that's for sure.

James Blatch: Yeah, you can come over here and fix everything at some point. But yeah. Great, Ian, thank you so much and we'll speak to you again soon.

Ian Sutherland: Yeah, thanks for having me.

James Blatch: All right, before we do anything else, let me give you the link to get the discount code that Ian talked about and you can go to [selfpublishingformula.com/sidekick](https://selfpublishingformula.com/sidekick).

I should say, I think I probably have to say and I should say that we do affiliate for Ian's Author Platform Sidekick service. But we only affiliate for services that we personally recommend and are very happy with and you are very happy with it, Mark, because you've been with Ian for quite a long time.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, he's been doing some work on my Twitter platform for probably a year now and it's certainly grown significantly since then. I haven't even checked. I think I'm probably around about 30,000 followers now.

So yeah, but that's been pretty good and yes I do start to see people reaching out to me on Twitter. Other authors and readers will come back and comment on things that I've posted or have automatically posted. So great for conversation starting and another way to reach out and find readers who might not otherwise have heard from me.

James Blatch: It's definitely worth checking out the Author Platform Sidekick because I think Ian's divided it up such that you pay a little and have a service or you can scale it up and have quite a lot done on your behalf. I don't know but I think you're one of the people he chooses to pioneer some of the services.

Mark Dawson: I pay for it.

James Blatch: I know you pay for it as well. But he often includes you if he's going to do something for the first time.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. I'm the crash test dummy for lots of things, but including that.

James Blatch: Yeah and what do I think of Twitter?

**Do you use Twitter personally? I mean, obviously, professionally.**

Mark Dawson: No, not that much. I mean, I'll check it once or twice, once a day probably if I remember and I'll go days when I don't remember. So it's not my main platform.

Facebook is miles and miles and miles away that the platform I spend the most time on for loads of different reasons. But yeah, I mean, Twitter's on my phone. I do check it and other authors, people like Jo Penn, I think she prefers Twitter. She gets more out of it and it's great for reaching out to people. On a kind of one to one basis, to meet people you otherwise may struggle to meet.

But for that kind of just an organized platform that allows you to scale your message. Facebook is the one for me. But your mileage may vary.

James Blatch: Yes. Objects in the rear view mirror may be closer than they appear and other things. I mean, I like Twitter. From a personal social

media point of view, it's my social media platform of choice, really. It's the one I spend more time on. I think it's good for opinion and raw news.

Although, you have to be very cautious with both of those things, particularly raw news and by raw news, I don't mean dicey news. I just mean the unfiltered, unfiltered by mass media.

Mark Dawson: Fake news, you mean.

James Blatch: Fake news, people. Fake news.

But from an author point of view, obviously, that's why we have Ian on because he is the guy who follows this and it is a platform that can work for you and I'd urge you to give some of that a go.

Hopefully, fingers crossed, next week's episode will be from the London Book Fair, having been recorded there. So we're looking forward to doing that. I'm looking forward to skiing as we get going on this and we will be back.

### **What is next week? Next week is going to be Reader Links.**

Mark Dawson: Reader Links, yes, with John Logsdon, who is an alumnus of the course and has a very nice service that will enable you to better read your data from Amazon and do lots of other cool stuff in the background as well. So yeah, definitely want to listen to next week.

James Blatch: Yeah, great. We're looking forward to that. I hope you have a great week. We'll see you next Friday. Bubbye.

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