

## **EPISODE 121: PINTEREST FOR AUTHORS – WITH PIP REID**

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 the Self Publishing Formula Podcast with James Blatch and Mark Dawson on a Friday with your 45 minutes or so value packed podcast that's going to give you more stuff than you ever knew you needed to accelerate your writing career and turn writing from a hobby into a living and there's living proof, the bearded living proof in front of me.

Mark Dawson: Yes. That's right. That's the plan.

James Blatch: There you were, sat on the train, not that long ago, bashing out your novels, going to work to watch films and pornography, which was your job in those days, as was mine and now look at us.

Mark Dawson: Still watching films and pornography . No not really.

Yeah, that was 2014. Four years ago and things have changed quite a lot since then and all for the better.

James Blatch: We've got plenty of people in our community listening to this podcast in our Facebook groups who've completed a similar journey, got to that point where they're paying their way.

We visited many of them in person and people who are aspiring and setting out on that journey, even I've been writing my novel today because I'm obviously under tremendous pressure now.

Mark Dawson: What's that out the window? It's a pig.

**James Blatch: And what have you been doing? Who have you just been talking to?**

Mark Dawson: I've been interviewed by the New York Times. I was contacted, emailed off my website last night, yesterday evening and they asked me if I'd speak to them about the nerve agent poisoning in Salisbury because they wanted to find local writers to dealing with it.

James Blatch: Dealing with it?

Mark Dawson: Oh yeah. The book I'm writing at the moment has that as a kind of jumping off point. So they wanted to talk to me about that. So that was interesting.

The reporter is actually quite scene-ish. She's head of the UK office, had lots of interesting conjecture, possibly, and has been speaking with police and some experts, intelligence experts and was reasonably indiscreet as we were talking.

**James Blatch: What have you learned? Spill the beans.**

Mark Dawson: I don't think I can say really. It's not too much.

She was just basically saying that a lot of the story hasn't come out. They don't really know what's happening and it is a fair point. I mean, the Brits have said almost nothing.

I was down looking at this all the time because I'm writing something similar to it. But there is very, very little official as to what actually happened on that Sunday afternoon and after that and that vacuum has left a great big space for conspiracists and Russia to spread potential misinformation.

As she was walking around Salisbury talking to the locals, she said a large amount of them believed the Russian story that it wasn't anything to do with them, which then leads to the rabbit hole of conspiracy theories that it was the British or the Americans. We've mentioned that before. So it was interesting.

James Blatch: Well, it's got a reasonable percentage of people believe that 9/11 was the CIA.

Mark Dawson: Yeah and the moon landings were faked and there's always a few people like that.

James Blatch: The least unlikely solution is almost certainly the correct one and I think they found parts of the missile or they traced the missile that shot down the Malaysian flight to date. Positively traced it to Russia and all these things happen and they look like they're Russian and people say the Russians have done this.

You can either think there's a worldwide conspiracy run by the Americans and British and others to keep implicating Russia in terrible things, to what end, I'm not sure. Or you can think Russia's a bit of a rogue nation and carries out these attacks because it's a bit of a bully boy in the world, which seems to me like they're more likely.

### **Am I now in danger? I've said that on the podcast.**

Mark Dawson: Oh, you might be. If there's no podcast next week and James is gone.

Speaking of raises, I took my daughter, this is completely off topic, but I picked her up from school the other day. One of the other children, another six year old, pointed at me and said, "Oh look, Freya, your grandad." I was shocked.

James Blatch: Beards do age you a little bit.

Mark Dawson: They do. I know. Yeah.

James Blatch: But that's what you're going for, obviously.

Now we've got a couple of things to mention before we talk about Pinterest, which is a growing and exciting social media platform that you need to know about. Believe me, after this interview, you'll realize how much you needed to know about Pinterest from an author perspective.

But before we get into that, I've got to mention that we've been recording a Webinar with our cover design guru, Stewart Bache and I have to say, even though I present the webinar and worked with Stewart on it over the last few weeks to get it to the point of recording we did a couple nights ago, it is superb.

It's a gripping, middle 40 minutes where you're watching Stewart work with a blank canvas, talk about the images he's selected and then start putting them together and almost in seconds, light bulbs are going off in my mind, thinking, "Oh, that's how you do that."

It's a really, really valuable step-by-step instructional webinar, not just on how to do it in Photoshop, but also, Mark, you've seen it now.

**We also talk about the theory of what makes a good cover and why it works.**

Mark Dawson: Yeah, it is a really good webinar. I'm not just saying that because I'm talking to James. Only James is responsible for it.

It is really excellent and, also, people who know me, I can be quite stinting in my praise sometimes as I've got high standards. This is really, really good. I strongly recommend you watch it if you're interested in selling more books and especially if you are interested in designing your own covers. So yeah. It's really, really good stuff and well worth your time.

James Blatch: We're trying to get it up and ready for the day that this podcast goes out, which is a week on Friday as we speak at the moment. So if you're listening to this podcast, you should be able to visit this page, [selfpublishingformula.com/bookcover](https://selfpublishingformula.com/bookcover), so all one word "bookcover," [selfpublishingformula.com/bookcover](https://selfpublishingformula.com/bookcover).

There will be a waiting list and you'll be the first to know. You'll get sent a link as soon as the webinar's ready to watch. Yes, it's really good and there's even, for watching the webinar, a little voucher code in there to say thank you because it's the first time we've done this to make it very much worth your while.

Good, okay, well, we've dealt with the Russians. We dealt with book covers and we are now moving onto the social media platform Pinterest.

### **Are you on Pinterest, Mark?**

Mark Dawson: No.

James Blatch: Okay, now that's not uncommon answer. I am on Pinterest and I quite like it because it's a bit like Instagram.

We talked about Instagram recently, that it's a visual social media platform and I like it. But it's not intuitive I think. I think when you look at Pinterest

and you're on the boards, it doesn't actually make sense a lot of the time where the pictures are come from.

You realize it's got a slightly strange system of you basically right clicking something on the web and saying I want to add this to my board and it sits there as an image. But it is linked back also to where it came from. But you create these thematic boards on it.

Now the fact that it's not instantly understandable I think from a using it point of view for marketing, I think a lot of people have steered clear of it. But one person who hasn't is called Pip Reid. Now she's down in New Zealand, I think about to relocate to Canada. But they're in New Zealand at the moment. She is a Kiwi. They run a website called, I think, Bible Pathway.

She'll explain in the interview and do children's Biblical books. They are turning over and I can't be indiscreet here. So I don't know whether she mentions these figures in the interview now. But she turns over a few thousands a month.

They have a good business from this and she was telling me that knocking on 80% of their traffic is driven solely from Pinterest. That is something that should be making your ears prick up at this stage if you're an author, particularly if you've got a particular thing.

I'm military history. Now Pinterest is made for that. It's images like this one behind me if you're watching on youtube, a Vulcan bomb and I've already started creating military pages and every week, people are taking the pins I've put up there and put them on their military history pages. What a perfect place to have a novel set in the Cold War popping up as an advert in the middle of that and your area may well be similar.

You may have something that's quite visual that people like to look at, like the naked torsos of billionaires if that's your particular genre, for instance.

Okay, let's hear from Pip. Let's talk about Pinterest and then Mark and I will come back and have a chat in a few minutes.

Pip Reid, thank you so much for joining us on the Self Publishing Formula Podcast from a long way, in fact, as far away as possible because you are what they call the Antipodes from the UK.

Pip Reid: Absolutely. I'm probably your furthest away fan here in New Zealand.

James Blatch: I think you are. We've got a few people in the area. But yeah, New Zealand, I think if you drilled down from where I am now, you come out not too far away from where you are sitting.

Pip Reid: Exactly. No, it's all good. It's all good. Technology's amazing.

James Blatch: It is, a very good signal, actually. It's better than the signal I get from someone who's five miles away normally.

Now, we're gonna talk Pinterest, which is, we have to say right at the beginning, there are a lot of social media platforms and I know what it's like being an author. For some people, they kind of go, "I can't do another one."

Twitter, they kind of know it's there. They don't really know how to do it and Pinterest is one of those platforms I think is just under the radar for most people.

So it's really interesting to talk to you and, of course, talk about the book that you've created for us, which is going live as we speak.

**What, first of all, attracted you to Pinterest? How did you discover it?**

Pip Reid: When I started writing about four and a half years ago, I had a look at all the social media platforms that were available and, of course, Facebook was the one that everyone went on.

Instagram I thought would be great because we have so many images. What else do I ... Google+ I looked at because of the SEO benefits and then I looked at Pinterest because we use a lot of illustrations in what we do, I thought Pinterest is such a visual platform, why not give it a go?

So I thought the only way to learn how to use this social media platform is to start and so I thought why don't I just create an account and put up a few images and see what happens, which is what I did and nothing happened.

I would add the odd image every now and then and after a few months, I thought, "Wow, nothing's really happening. So I might give this up," and then I started reading blogs and things. I realized that with Pinterest, if you just applied a few basic principles, you could, over a certain period of time, start to get a lot of traffic to your website and so I thought, "Well, I'll post it there and see what happens."

I'm very glad I did because it now sends the most social media traffic to our website by far. I think 90% of our social media traffic comes by way of Pinterest now.

James Blatch: I had a look at the advertising platform a little while ago. I found a few issues with it, particularly with reporting. So we weren't getting good tracking with it.

So I stopped then and I'll go back into it at some point. But I was surprised when you contacted us about Pinterest and said, "Hey, do you know that it could be a powerful platform for authors?" that you weren't talking about the paid platform.

**You're talking about organic, for free, Pinterest.**

Pip Reid: Absolutely. When I heard you mention it, I think you talked to Mark about you were creating this course and you wanted to do a Pinterest ads module and I thought I just knew the amount of traffic we were getting and I thought, "Gosh, most authors probably wouldn't have the budget to spend on Pinterest."

But with some time and just applying a few key principles, they don't need to spend a dime to get a lot of traffic and so I thought, "Oh, should I email James and tell him?" Then in the end, I just thought, "You know what? I'll just send an email, probably won't hear back. But I just put in my two cents and then he can carry on."

James Blatch: Our ears pricked up. They really did about using the platform, particularly organically for free so. We're all ears, really, Pip. So you've got to start spilling some of the secrets.

### **Why don't you set the context? Tell us about your books.**

Pip Reid: I write children's books and educational materials. I started doing that about four and a half years ago and at that time, I'd always had this desire to write for children, but done nothing about it. Then I got made redundant from, at the time, New Zealand's largest educational publisher.

I had some time on my hands and I thought, "Why don't I just do a writing for children course and see what happens?" So I did that over six months.

With those courses, the good thing is you can try different types of writing and so the style of writing I found that I loved was creative nonfiction and so I thought, "Why don't I just start writing?"

For me, Bible stories interested me and so once I finished the course, I just started writing these type of stories and then my husband came up with a

name. He said, "Why don't we just call what we're doing Bible Pathway Adventures?" There it began.

Then we found an illustrator and we made a crazy decision to create an app and so it goes on and today, we've got 15 stories.

We have numerous downloadable activity books. We have an app that's Android and iOS friendly and yeah. We just carry on. So that's the background to what we're doing.

But with Pinterest, it doesn't matter what genre you write in, you can still get good results if you persevere because I think with Pinterest, the key thing to know is that it does take a bit of time.

But the benefits are huge because one of the advantages of Pinterest is that your pins, which are the images and texts that you can post on Pinterest, have a very long shelf life.

So with Facebook, you can put a post and within six hours, you're probably going to get most of the likes and shares and engagement that you can get. With Instagram, it's shorter. With Twitter, it's even shorter.

But with Pinterest, one thing I found is that a pin that you pinned maybe three years ago can still send traffic to your author platform, whether that's your website, Amazon, your blog site, whatever it is.

I realized that something I did two, three, six months ago, a year or two years ago can still work to send traffic and I think that's one thing that stands Pinterest out from the rest of the other social media platforms is that longevity.

Also, the other thing to know with Pinterest is it's actually a search engine. People go on and they search for information. Obviously they use Google.

But Pinterest is a search engine in its own right and it's a visual search engine.

So you just think you combine pins that have longevity with the search engine capability and people are clicking on pins, that if you've tagged your author platform, will send you traffic years after you've made the initial effort to put that piece of information on Pinterest, whereas Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, all that can get lost within a week unless people really go and look at your site.

James Blatch: I think that is important to understand about Pinterest in that a huge amount of what we see on Facebook and Twitter and so on is recycled. But a lot of it's original. It's posting someone's made in that moment.

Pinterest is effectively pinning things that you found around the existing web into a single place.

For instance, for my genre, and I can tell you it's worked pretty well for me implementing some of this, military jets is perfect actually for Pinterest because very boring people like me go onto Pinterest and look at picture of 1965 Hawker Hunters.

A lot of people do that. I mean, I can see how popular. There are boards and boards and boards, hundreds, probably thousands of Cold War jets on there and what a perfect place for my book, which is Cold War Jet based, to stick in the middle of that and just to back up what you say.

So I did a flurry of activity whenever it was, last year sometime when we first started talking about it on the podcast and every week, I will see notifications saying how many people took one of my pins and put it on their board that have basically visited my page.

So yes, passively, a lot of work at the beginning and I'm doing nothing with it now, just leaving it there until I go back into it, which I'm going to, having been re-enthused reading your book. But it's working just at that level.

**Pip Reid: Do you link all your pins that you post back to your author platform?**

James Blatch: No, I don't. I have a single pin in the middle, which is basically an advert I created when I was playing with the paid Pinterest ads and that's the one that advertises the book and says, "Do you want to be a beta reader?" People click on that.

I'm starting to go through the book. We've obviously been working with it over the last few weeks.

**I can see what I need to be doing with it. But I'm not there yet. So let's talk a bit about that.**

Pip Reid: I think that's key and that's one thing I didn't realize probably the first six months is that you can link every pin that you post to wherever you want people to go.

I link every pin I post that is my content to my website. I don't put a lot of, "Buy my book. Buy my downloadable activity book. Buy this. Buy that."

What I do is I say I might create a quiz because our audience is looking for educational materials for their children. Quizzes are extremely popular and I learnt that because I started putting them on Pinterest and I started seeing the amount of repins that I was getting and I was like, "Ooh, that's interesting," and there's another thing to add.

Pinterest is a great research platform. So because I saw how popular quizzes were on Pinterest, I then went and created quiz activity books, 100

Bible Quizzes, Bible Hero Quiz Book, which get downloads every day off our website. So that's just an aside.

With Pinterest, every pin I post, I will link it and it may just be an image. It may be a quiz that they can download. When they get to my website, I don't have on the image, "Buy my book."

But above the image that I've posted that they can instantly download, I will have a banner, a colorful banner that links them to a product. So it's not sort of salesy, salesy, in your face on Pinterest. But once they get to our website, they can then download the activity that they are looking for, but also they can click on a banner that takes them to a sales page.

James Blatch: Obviously there needs to be a relevancy here. People are just going to get annoyed if every time they click on a picture of a Hunter it just ends up on my landing page for a book. That's going to quickly wear thin.

But if I said on the picture, "Have a look at the squadron," and it went to a page that had a whole page dedicated to that squadron and as part of that would be, that's where you're suggesting we do this, part of that would be, "Hey, do you want to be a beta reader of my book?"

### **At the bottom, there's a banner or something.**

Pip Reid: Absolutely and I think that's where you can put affiliate links if you want to go down that track. But yet, everything's relevant because what you don't want is a high bounce rate because people have such short attention spans that they don't see what they've come for immediately. They'll just click out of your platform. So it's always relevant.

For example, I might put a quiz. It might be David and Goliath, for example. It takes them through to a page that is formatted for mobile and desktop

where they can easily download that piece of content and print it out. It's all optimized for US letter size.

But above that will be, say, a banner that says, "David and Goliath Activity Book," and a few features and they can click on that and it goes through to a sales page.

They can choose not to click on that and just get the activity. So they're still getting what they want when they get to the website. But this is something additional that they can check out because they may be looking for more David and Goliath activities.

That's why they clicked on the David and Goliath quiz in the first place. So I always make it relevant. Otherwise, people just get annoyed.

James Blatch: You say that people are looking for Bible based activities. But I guess a lot of people on Pinterest who potentially end up on your page are just browsing on Pinterest.

I'm trying to think how this translates to somebody perhaps who writes romance books. People who like reading romance books may go onto Pinterest and look up particular actors or actresses or so on.

**So there is a way of trying to target your audience without necessarily being somebody who's already looking for your product.**

Pip Reid: Absolutely.

If I was a romance author, I would create a Pinterest platform that had boards for all my books where you could add your covers. You could add maybe behind the scenes, your research.

I would be writing blog posts that talk about some travel I did that's related to the books, put photos, things like that, not so salesy. But in those blog

posts, you could mention your books or you could have a banner to the side of your blog posts.

You do get people just looking for all sorts and some people are just drawn to imagery because we have great characters that we just put that are all linked. You will find with Pinterest you can have a slightly higher bounce rate and a bounce rate is where people hit your website and they exit out pretty quickly and so we do attract people that might not be interested.

But they like the picture and then they turn up on our website and they say, "Oh, that's not what I was looking for," and then they quickly exit out or they're checking your link. "Oh yeah, that works. I'll go back to it later on."

You'll find if you get a lot of traffic from Pinterest, you will get a slightly higher bounce rate than, say, just people looking, searching on Google, for example.

James Blatch: Yeah, okay.

Pip Reid: And that's another thing to mention is that Google picks up Pinterest pins.

Say you look at Google images. You might have put a pin up, James, from your website so it's showing that it's from your website.

But then Google Images might also pick up that you've put it on Pinterest. So that's actually doubling the pin on Google. So that's just another thing to note that Google picks up Pinterest images as well.

James Blatch: And you say this is driving traffic for you, the biggest driver of traffic in terms of social media. It's obviously working very well for you.

**Can you quantify that for me in terms of percentage? How much do you rely on Pinterest and how is it translating commercially for you?**

Pip Reid: We probably get between 20 and 30,000 visitors a month to our website. Social media drives about 45% of that traffic and of that, Pinterest drives 90%, makes up 90%. So we get a lot because our audience is on Pinterest.

Our audience generally is I would say mums between the age of 25 and 50 with children and they either have a faith or they're homeschooling or something like that. Those type of users use Pinterest a lot.

There was another reason why we decided to use Pinterest is we knew our audience was on Pinterest.

Put it this way. We don't get many teenage boys looking for our materials.

James Blatch: No, but that sounds like a literary fiction audience as well.

**If you look at the demographics of literary fiction readers, it's that demographic almost you just described.**

Pip Reid: Absolutely. There are more female than male users on Pinterest and that's the thing. If you go onto Pinterest and set up a business account, it will give you analytics. That's the advantage of a business account.

Now the analytics don't drill down too much. But they give you a feel for the age and the sex of your audience and the countries and definitely North American females between the ages of 30 and 55 are a large user group on Pinterest.

So if you're writing to that and that fits your audience, then I think it's worth giving Pinterest a go. You just might have to get a little creative how you draw the traffic in.

**James Blatch: And is that a big part of your audience, the North American audience?**

Pip Reid: Yes, so of our audience, 75% comes out of North America, actually followed by the Philippines. A lot of Catholics and they speak English, followed by the UK. But North America is by far our biggest audience.

James Blatch: Without wishing to sound cynical, Bible is big business in America and you can't help but notice that when you drive around on the TV channels and the nicest building, obviously, in town is often a big church.

**I can see there's a commercial aspect to Christianity in North America.**

Pip Reid: Oh, absolutely and you've got a lot of Sunday School teachers looking for materials to use in their classes.

James Blatch: I'll tell you what's exciting about this also is we get a lot of inquiries from people who write children's books and we always say the same thing, which is they'll say, "Does this work for children's books?"

They'll perhaps look at some of the courses we do and stuff and the answer we always give is, tough. It's going to be tough for you because children don't use social media platforms, particularly for your younger age. So you're looking at parents and grandparents and so on and that isn't so far.

None of the particular social media platforms have necessarily lent themselves to this area. You just have to find a way of making them work.

**This is the platform that does appear to be a more fertile ground for children's authors, particularly illustrated books and that's obviously what you found.**

Pip Reid: Absolutely and I think you have to be a little creative because I get it is harder for children's books for a number of reasons.

But one thing I learnt early on and this is just a tip for children's authors is when we illustrate our children's books, we create PSD files and we get our illustrator to layer up every character. So every character is its own layer.

So what I do when we get a PSD file with an illustration is I can export out every single individual character and with that, I can create content that's colorful, it's illustrated and it's appealing.

As a children's author, you have to think a little bit outside the box. What is my audience looking for? Then how can I make that appealing and when you can figure that out, you can start uploading those pieces of content to your blog and then you can also attach them to Pinterest and link them through to your blog. But I think you do have to think a little creatively.

I always say to children's book authors how does your illustrator create the illustrations and can he give you those individual characters that you can then use using Canva or Pic Monkey.

I use Photoshop to import and create these beautiful pieces of content that parents can then go and download and use in the home and of course, if it's got your branding on it, then it's top of mind. So that's something I learnt early on.

I think you'll see with a lot of our content, we have characters, cartoon characters everywhere and we own that IP. That's the thing. It's more intellectual property that you're not paying for.

You've already paid for it once for the illustration. If we were to go and commercially license the amount of characters and illustrations that we use, we would be spending tens of thousands of dollars. So what we say is ask

your illustrator to layer up every character so you can then use that to create your own content. You've already paid for it. You own it 100%.

James Blatch: That's excellent advice. In fact, across the board, I would say, even when you're getting your cover designed, have that conversation with your illustrator, your cover designer right at the beginning. Ask them for the individual layers when they create it.

Now some of them, this will be unknown territory for them and they might say no. But some of them, as long as you got an agreement with them in advance and there might be a consideration for that, you can then use these elements, which are great for creating social media posts.

**You might take your single character out of the front cover and use them elsewhere. But obviously in your situation, it lends itself very well.**

Pip Reid: I can create coloring pages, James. I can just strip out all the color from each layer and create a coloring page.

Now coloring pages for children's book authors are immensely valuable because parents are looking for coloring pages.

Our coloring page section on our website is one of the most visited sections because parents are just looking for fun activities. If you can also create coloring pages out of your books, that's fantastic content to drive traffic to your website because it's useful and it's valuable. All the stuff that we post is valuable to parents.

James Blatch: And that's great and very much the way modern online businesses work, which is to present value to create a community, a good place to be and a side effect from that is the fact that you are going to be then selling some products down the line at some point as long as they dovetail nicely with the area you've created. Exactly the right way to do it.

How complicated is this? You're talking about getting the layers and I know some people listening will be thinking, "I don't really know how to work with layers and so on."

**Just going back to Pinterest for a second, how complicated did you find, how easy would you say to an author it is to do?**

Pip Reid: You mean to set up an account?

James Blatch: Yeah, to set up an account and get it working in the way that you have.

Pip Reid: It's pretty straightforward. Pinterest is quite intuitive.

All you do is you just go in and you just sign up to an account, make sure it's a business account so you can get the analytics. That's something that you can ignore or you can use. It doesn't matter. But it gives you that option.

Then once you've signed up to an account, it says, "Do you want to create a board?" You're like, "Yes," and so you create a board by giving it a title.

I might say I want to create a Bible quizzes board, take Bible quizzes, a 70 character description, describing what it is and then you start posting your images.

You just make sure when you do it and it will prompt you to do it, to link them to where you want the person to eventually land on to either get that piece of content or to read what you're offering and so I found ... I mean, there's always a learning curve with any social media platform.

Pinterest is pretty intuitive and then you just start pinning and then you'll get the hang of it and you'll create more boards.

One thing to note though is with Pinterest, you can join group boards that have even more followers than you may have. So you may start off and you've got a couple of followers and so not many people may be seeing your pins. But if you join a group board that has maybe 10,000, 20,000 followers, every time you pin to that board, your pins are going to be seen by other people and so you'll get more followers.

You'll get more traffic and it just builds on itself. So I think the thing with Pinterest, the key takeaway is just keep going. Just keep pinning and that's what I learnt three and a half, four years ago. Just keep pinning.

I still see pins that I pinned three years ago still being pinned, still driving traffic to the website. But you just need to get started and you just need to know that, "Okay, I might not see much activity for the first couple of months," but just keep going.

There's a compound effect.

**James Blatch: When you pin one of your pins to another board in the group, does it take the landing site, the URL that you've attached to it with it?**

Pip Reid: Yes. Yup, takes everything with it. So I am a member of maybe four or five boards that have more followers than we do and so whenever I pin, it just pins exactly the same information.

For example, with all our downloadable educational books, we also sell them on a website called Teachers Pay Teachers, which is a very popular educational materials website. I will pin an activity book cover to my site and then I'll also pin it to a group site of followers that are looking for those kind of materials and it just takes all the information.

James Blatch: Pinterest, I mean, it's actually not that new. I think it's 2010. It was around for a few years. How are you finding it? Because the other platforms, particularly Facebook are moving away from allowing people to really exploit it organically and it's becoming a bit of a pay to play area on Facebook.

### **Is that happening at all on Pinterest?**

Pip Reid: I think they are tweaking the algorithms. I read something recently.

In the past, you would pin and it would automatically come up in the news feeds. Now I think they're releasing pins over a period of time. But the thing with Pinterest is it's a search engine. So even if a pin that you post doesn't start showing up for a day, it doesn't matter because it's a search engine and so when people, say, plug in "David and Goliath Bible quiz," it will still come up in the search results, especially if it has been shared a lot, of course. It'll come higher up in the search results.

So I think with Pinterest, even though they are tweaking the algorithm because there's so much content on there, remember that it's a search engine. So people, just because they might not see it in their newsfeed doesn't mean they won't find it when they type in a search terms. I think that's the key.

James Blatch: That is an important difference because Facebook's, frankly, awful to search on and people trying to find things on Facebook's a nightmare.

Pip Reid: Pinterest's a great search engine. It really is.

James Blatch: I still get the feeling it is in the growing phase, even though it's been around for a while now, not as old as Facebook. But it's been around for a few years.

**It still feels to me like it's in the phase of just trying to get as many daily active users as possible. So this is a great time to be there at the beginning.**

Pip Reid: I think I did make a note last night. I think maybe 200 million Pinterest users, half of them are North American, half of them outside North America.

But I just think if you've got visual content, I just think Pinterest is a fantastic platform. The same with blogs. I know blogs went a bit out of fashion. But you can really use blogs to drive traffic to your website, not just because you're writing a blog and putting it out there and hoping Google picks it up.

I can also attach it to Pinterest and you'll get even more traffic to that blog and you'll get more longevity from that blog because people are using Pinterest like they're using Google. So in a way, you're covering yourself with two search engines.

If you can write a blog post and have an attractive image and a good headline, people are gonna find you via Pinterest whereas if you put that on Facebook, within a day or two, just lost in the newsfeed. But with Pinterest, people are searching, "How to write dada, dada, da," and it's gonna come up.

But again, it's just time. How many hours in the day do you have? So I think it's a matter of picking the social platform that work for you because I don't really use Twitter that much. Our audience isn't really on Twitter. Our audience is on Facebook and Instagram and Pinterest and so that's where I'll spend the time.

James Blatch: We spent several thousand dollars showing that Twitter is not working at the moment, certainly for smaller businesses. I see the big

advertisers on there and whether it works for them or not, I doubt it actually works for them either. It's a very, very quick and fast timeline, Twitter. So it's quite difficult to get the views.

Pip Reid: Absolutely. So if you can put some time in with Pinterest, you're gonna get that longevity that you just will not get on any other social media platform.

James Blatch: Well, I think this is really great, Pip, really exciting.

One of the greatest things about every science fiction book I've got is the cover. You always love a good science fiction cover and the idea that when you first get your cover design, either doing it yourself or with a professional designer to be thinking about some imagery that you can take away and use on Pinterest to fill out the backstory because you always get two or three options at the beginning.

Say to your designer, "I'll have all three just the bits and do a better price," and then use all this stuff. Populate an entire board around your novel with some of the background imagery that goes with it.

### **What a fun thing to do anyway, a real fan orientated thing to do.**

Pip Reid: It is fun. I can get quite lost creating educational materials and so what I've done is I have folders and folders of characters and images. We pull every little thing we can out of that PSD file for us, bags of grain, a sword, a character, a crown, a tree. You can just use everything and you own it 100%.

So you don't have to worry about commercial rights, nothing like that and it'll set you apart. Make sure those images are high res. So if you did go to print, for example, make sure they're 300 DPI. So these are just little tips. But it's getting a little bit technical here.

James Blatch: You mentioned rights a couple of times. So in terms of a board, I mean, the way Pinterest works is you find something online that you like and you pin it to your board.

**I don't think there's a particular rights issue because you're not, as far as I could see, you're not breaching any rights by doing that.**

Pip Reid: Exactly, no. You're not actually selling. I mean, if I was selling a book with other people's images, I would be breaching rights. But just pinning things that you find on the web is not breaching copyright, yeah, pinning other people's pins. You've got nothing to worry about there.

It's when you take other people's intellectual property and insert it into your own content that you're breaching copyright and then if you're selling that. Buying images for commercial use can get very expensive. You can spend \$90 on a little image.

So if you can be thinking ahead, if you want to use Pinterest and you're wanting to use your imagery, yeah, think ahead and talk to your illustrator because say you spend \$100 on an illustration, but you could get immense value from that on illustrations. It's almost like mining. How can I get the most value? How can I create perhaps a coloring page, even a coloring page for adults. Just think creatively.

James Blatch: If people are wondering how to get started, a really great way to get started is this wonderful book that Pip's given us and it is at and the URL is live now which is [selfpublishingformula.com/Pinterest](http://selfpublishingformula.com/Pinterest) and it's Pinterest, as in interest with a P. That's right, isn't it?

Some people say "pintrest" but it's Pinterest and yeah the book's great, Pip. It's been really good talking to you.

**I'm assuming then, since you lost your job in publishing and writing whether you are now successful commercially with your own venture here.**

Pip Reid: Yes. We've been going about four years now and we're definitely making a living from our writing and that's split across our printed books, our printed children's books and also our downloadable activity books that you can go onto our website.

We sell a lot of materials through our website, which works very well. But I think you need the traffic to be able to sell well off your website. That's why Pinterest is good because it gets traffic to our website and they might not buy first time. But it makes them aware of what we offer and then they're coming back.

James Blatch: Great, well, Pip, it's been great talking to you all the way there in New Zealand. Signal's been unbelievable considering how far it is.

I can see a Wayne Gretzky poster on the wall, which makes no sense for New Zealand.

Pip Reid: My husband's Canadian and that's our retirement fund, a signed Gretzky poster.

James Blatch: Oh, he's signed it. He's forgiven him for becoming an American though, has he?

Pip Reid: Oh, gosh. Don't talk to him about that. It's signed and behind glass.

James Blatch: Oh, look at that. Okay, well, you better not give your location away. Good, Pip, thank you so much for us. It's been brilliant.

Pip Reid: Thanks, James.

James Blatch: There you go. I mean, she's nailed it. I think as our friends across the pond say, she's crushing it when it comes to Pinterest.

Mark Dawson: Our younger friends across the pond. Yes. Yeah, obviously it's an interest platform. I think the challenge is for fiction writers is finding relevant images. But it's certainly something that is on my radar now.

James Blatch: What we should have said at the beginning is one of the reasons we're talking to her now is because we got very excited about this and saw the work that she's doing and know this is a big area that we need to across and we have commissioned a course from her.

Pip is doing a course called Pinterest for Authors. It goes into really explicit detail. It's a really good curriculum, the course. So that's going to be added to advertising for authors. So the advertising for authors course, the price of which doesn't change, by the way.

Each time, we keep making it bigger and bigger, probably seven or eight separate modules in there now that cover all sorts of area that are gonna help you market your books.

So the Ads for Authors course, we are days away from it opening on June the 6th, Wednesday, June the 6th. That's going to go live and Pinterest for Authors will be added in probably mid-July is the target date we've got at the moment, so an opportunity to do that. There's also a book.

If you go to our resources page on the website, you'll see that Pip has authored a book on Pinterest to get you started on it. I mean, hopefully, having listened to that interview, people will be thinking this is something that they definitely need to experiment with.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely. No, I will be looking forward to that course, going through that when Pip has it ready for us.

James Blatch: Yeah and the great thing, I suppose for some people in particular, the beginning of their careers is what Pip's discovered about Pinterest at the moment is it's not the paid platform that's going to yield you good. It's actually organic reach with your images drawing people in that way, which is like Facebook in its early days and Instagram in its early days and in a few years time, Pinterest would have worked out that they want to be charging people for that kind of traffic delivery.

But at the moment, it's there for the taking. So get involved. Be one of those early adopters and make hay while the sun shines. Can I get any more cliches into that little sentence?

Mark Dawson: No, that was full on.

**James Blatch: Do you have any more international press appointments for today?**

Mark Dawson: No, I don't. I don't, actually. But one thing I will say before we close.

I hope GDPR has kind of the Y2K equivalent has calmed down now and I'm still, as record this, still bombarded with emails from people who are about to lose 90% of their email list because I'm not responding to any of these emails.

James Blatch: No. No one is.

Mark Dawson: So yeah, it's quite nice. As I kind of moat around various Facebook group and forums where writers hang out, it is still quite nice to see our podcast episode mentioned quite a lot. So it's good to know that we've ... I can hear James' dog barking in the background.

James Blatch: My dog is barking. Dora is barking. I better go and check. I think it's the Russians. They've turned up at the front door.

Mark Dawson: It is, yeah. I'll quickly round that off that people are finding value with that episode and with their freebie that we've put together.

James Blatch: And I genuinely think, I mean, one of the common comments we've had back is the way that we've approached it, which is to look at the lawyer's advice, look at our own experience and put something together in terms of a common sense way forward, which I don't think a lot of other people are doing.

A lot of other people are saying, "Well, here's the letter of the law. So you need to do that from now on," and the trouble is we don't really know what the letter of the law turns into in practice at the moment. So that is not the best way.

It's been really, really, a really good episode. It's gone far and wide actually and like you, I'm really surprised. There's somebody quite big in the digital space is about to lose me off their list because they've gone down this route of saying you've got to confirm and they've also tied it into a competition and tied it into subscriber only goodies. It actually says that. So I think it's sort of does something the GDPR doesn't need you to do, which is to ask.

I quite willingly joined their list and then does things GDPR very definitely says you definitely shouldn't do, which is tie subscription to goodies. But anyway, there you go. So it's this not very well understood area and hopefully, we picked our way through it quite well.

Mark Dawson: Yes, absolutely. You'll have to tell me off air who that was. I have an idea though anyway.

James Blatch: Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much indeed, Mark. We will be very busy for the next couple of weeks, but not too busy to be back with the podcast and we've got a really good interview from a lovely, lovely guy called David Penny next week. We bumped into him at London book fair and if you are a person of an older age, should we say ...

Mark Dawson: Me, apparently.

James Blatch: Yeah, not as old as grandad over there. It's particularly useful because we talk very directly about making money and retirement and self publishing is one of those areas that can be a very, very valuable thing for people on fixed incomes later in life. So it's all about self publishing anyway.

It applies to anyone at any age, but in particular, that. So that's David Penny next week. I'm looking forward to that. Good. Thank you very much, Mark. Have a nice rest of the day and you and I need to get off and open a course.

Mark Dawson: Let's do it.

Speaker 1: You've been listening to the Self Publishing Formula podcast. Visit us at [selfpublishgformula.com](http://selfpublishgformula.com) for more information, show notes, and links on today's topics. You can also sign up for our free video series on using Facebook ads to grow your mailing list. If you've enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. We'll see you next time.