

EPISODE 125: THE POWER OF FOCUS – WITH KAM KNIGHT

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 on a Friday and once again, we could say a sunny week in the UK. In fact, as we speak, I'm going to be in the air on the way to Los Angeles. So surely guaranteed sunshine.

Mark Dawson: Get you.

James Blatch: Though that would be ironic, wouldn't it? We come rainy old England, I'll get to LA ... and it's warm in England this week, and I'll get to LA and it will be pouring with rain.

Like in that scene from L.A. Story, where Steve Martin does the weather forecast in advance because it's LA, what could possibly go wrong?

Mark Dawson: Exactly, I'm sure you'll have lovely weather, but if on the off chance that you didn't then, no sympathy really.

James Blatch: Well here's the sympathy I need, I'm gonna have to get up at 05:00am on Sunday, to watch England versus, not Belgium, who are we playing in our middle match? It's Tunisia tonight.

Mark Dawson: Panama.

James Blatch: Panama, 05:00am.

Mark Dawson: See this, YouTube watchers, people watching YouTube, I just got out the world's smallest violin.

James Blatch: I'm working, I'm doing a quick job in LA and a quick job in New York and then coming home. So I'm basically doing America in a weekend, I'll be tired.

Mark Dawson: And then going back to America.

James Blatch: And then back to America for our big soiree in New York, so I'm really excited about going to ThrillerFest. I hope it's going to be genuinely thrilling.

Mark Dawson: Well yes, I'm sure it will be good, there's lots of excellent speakers, not including me. So yes, take your microphone and your recorder and we'll see if we can get some big names on the podcast.

James Blatch: I've got a couple of long haul flights to write my book on, which is good.

Mark Dawson: There you go, no more excuses, time to get finished.

James Blatch: I am cracking on with it now.

We're going to talk about a couple of things this episode. We've mentioned Cockygate before. So let's have an update from that, and I know, we're going to talk in a minute about the fact that we're hoping to do an episode, but it is quite legally fraught, and we've spoken to a couple of people already.

But unless we've got all sides and also, our lawyers are happy that we're not going to impinge on any ongoing court cases, we can go ahead with it.

I have to say, where we're standing at the moment, it's extremely unlikely we're going to be going ahead with that episode. It's just too legally fraught at the moment.

And it might be, as it turned out, from one of our interviewees, a year and half's time before we get some of the resolutions in this case. But that doesn't stop us addressing this issue.

Mark, I know you've already hinted at this, you're the well published author in our relationship here and I know you're pretty upset about the prospect of trademarking a single name.

Mark Dawson: I just don't think it's a very good idea.

We don't need to go in too much detail, but we started with, in fact we didn't even start with Cocky, there were people who've been trademarking single names before that.

LitRPG was one, I think we've heard. Rebellion was one that was going on at the same time. Space Marine was another that Games Workshop in the UK tried to trademark and had trouble with.

Then of course, Cocky came along and brought the whole thing kicking and screaming into the light of day and some of it I have just kind of shake my head about, we've had Dragon Slayer, Tamer, what else have we had?

James Blatch: Destroyer.

Mark Dawson: Destroyer and then, most recently, the word big, someone has tried to trademark the word big. And this can only really be people doing it to get a rise out of other people, certainly in that last situation. I just can't understand why someone would do that.

From my perspective, it's not something that I would do, I just don't really understand that.

Let's also just back up a bit, we have done it before, when it comes to Mark Dawson's Self Publishing Formula. So we have a trademark for that. Not for Mark Dawson, although I suppose I could seek to trademark my own name. Not for Self Publishing obviously and not for Formula.

But that collection of five words there, that we have invested tens of thousands of dollars into, and we've built up a little brand for ourselves, we have protected that.

If someone else in the States for example, says Mark Dawson's Self Publishing Formula, we would be able to enforce a trademark against them. Would I do it with the word ... with John Milton Fullers? No, I don't think I would. I certainly wouldn't with single words.

So I do find it troublesome and I've spoken to some of the priors involved here and this isn't something that I can really get my head around. So yeah, slightly worrying.

I think it would all come out in the wash and the resolution of this particular case I think will go some distance to clarify things. But at the moment, just all a little bit silly from my perspective.

James Blatch: I think it's worth pointing out say, in a mix people's anger at what's happened and there is a lot of anger flying around about this.

A little author might be thinking, "Should I be doing something to protect my books?" The conversation you've just had, the thought process you've just gone through is a very useful guide on this, 'cause you're a very successful author.

If your author income went tomorrow, it's would be devastating for you and your family and therefore, you're wholly interested in it and yet, you're not going to trademark quite a lot of aspects of your book 'cause you don't feel it's necessary.

That's one of the conversations I had was with Kevin Kneupper, who's involved in all of this, and he pointed out that there is common law.

So for instance, you might or may not remember this, about a year or so ago somebody launched a self publishing course called The Self Publishing Formula. Was it deliberate or was it an accident, I don't know.

We wrote to them, and they immediately said, "Oh, yeah, okay, sorry." And they changed the name to something else. We didn't need a trademark of Self Publishing Formula to do that.

Had that person not relented straight away, we wouldn't have had too much problem going to any kind of legal environment to establish the fact that that was our IP. You don't always need an actual trademark. In fact, really, it's for logos more than anything else and the adoption of your very specific name in a very specific industry.

Mark Dawson: In this country at least, I can't speak on US laws, I never studied it, but in this country, there's a concept called passing off. So if someone tries to pass off their work as mine, so that it would confuse my readers that I have another book out and this is something written by me, somebody basically tended to piggyback off my reputation.

There are ways that I can prevent that from happening without having to have a trademark. Copyright is also relevant in this as well. So there are weapons that we can use without going to the expense and controversy now of getting a trademark.

People are getting trademarks in a way that was never what was intended by trademark legislation. It's all a bit weird, but I think it will wash out in the end.

James Blatch: Hopefully and it's part and parcel of this industry being an immature industry, and it's finding its way, and some of these decisions that are being made now in the courts will set things out for the future.

So if we have interviewed you on this subject, I do apologize, but it's unlikely that we're going to be able to broadcast any of that any time soon. So we'll just, like everybody else, watch Twitter and see what unfolds.

Now, on a much happier subject, we have two things to say. One is that we've got your last, literally the last few days, if you're interested in our ad for authors course because we close up in the next 72 hours, something like that and that will be at least until late 2018, possibly early 2019.

We've been delighted with the response that the course has had this time, really delighted, we've had lots of interest and lots of people coming on board, and it's exciting to see people getting stuck into the course.

And so I think officially, it's going to close at midnight, wherever you are midnight on Wednesday the 27th of June.

For the UK, that's 08:00am Thursday morning. But if you're in the Pacific Islands, Easter Islands something like that, it's about midnight and then that will be it.

And we'll get on with shepherding those students through the various complexities of the course.

And what is the result of getting things right? Well, that's what this interview is about today. In fact, it's about two things. One is, the focus and concentration needed to get your writing done, which is apposite for me.

And also, just how getting this right, the self publishing business right, can unlock a lifestyle that you didn't dream of before.

Our interviewee is a man called Kam Knight. Lovely guy from Chicago in the US and Kam has had that transference from the 09:00 to 05:00, droll 09:00 to 05:00, he was an accountant I think, of all things. Not to be too rude about accountants, but it's not an industry you can dress up with excitement.

Mark Dawson: Not droll, dreary perhaps.

James Blatch: Dreary, yeah, droll is the wrong word. And then he unlocked this and since then, he has had the most traveling lifestyle. It's a really, really lovely interview and also useful, particularly on the concentration and focus thing.

And we do have a very useful guide for you to give away. I'll tell you the URL now, ahead of the interview. It's selfpublishingformula.com/focus and I, for one, am going to be downloading that PDF and applying it. But for now, let's hear from Kam.

Kam, with your big, professional microphone there, welcome to the SPF podcast. Always good to see a good microphone, and I think we're talking to you today from Chicago, your home.

But really, this interview is about how you've used self-publishing and writing to fulfill your wanderlust.

Kam Knight: Yes. So I'll just give a little bit of a background about myself. I'm Kam Knight and I'm a self publish author, and I've been writing for about the past 10 years, and I've written about 10 books. And then about seven years ago, I became a full-time author.

I quit my day job in October 2011 and about two months later, in December of 2011 I started traveling and since then, I've traveled to nearly 100 countries as a self published author.

I didn't just travel to big cities and top tourist destinations as one of my friends had lamented, "You really left no stone unturned." And really, I didn't.

I've camped in Taman Negara, the world's oldest rain forest. Hiked the second largest glacier ice sheet in Greenland. Spent the night over numerous active volcanoes, whether it was in Indonesia, Ethiopia, or Nicaragua. Slept in the deserted islands of the sand blasts in Panama. Rode a camel in the largest desert in the world, in the Sahara. And did game drives in the Savannas of Africa. So I was able to do all that as a self-published author.

James Blatch: Wow, amazing. Okay, well let me take you back a little bit to the beginning parts.

You started writing, you were working, so what was your career? What was your job before?

Kam Knight: So my background is accounting and computer programming, and I was a successful accountant and programmer for several years. Then, like many people listening to this podcast, at a certain point in my life, I had an itch to write, and it was an overpowering itch, one I couldn't resist and even though I wasn't a native English speaker and writing was my weakest subject.

It was just something that was calling for me and just something I had to do and so I stuck with it until I got better at it and then, the self-publishing platform with eBooks came around the time that I was writing. So it was just a really good option for me to go that route as a self publish author.

James Blatch: So you say English isn't your first language. What is your first language?

Kam Knight: It's actually Hindi.

James Blatch: Okay.

So you've already done a bit of traveling, just to end up being an accountant in Chicago. Very much sort of a global generation, I guess today's generation more so than my parents generation, more likely to be growing up in a country where they weren't necessarily born.

Do you think that part of your early life has fed into your desire to travel and see more of the world?

Kam Knight: I think it might have 'cause we did do a little bit of traveling when I was a kid.

But I think traveling is for people who are just very curious and open minded and really want to explore more than what they have in their home town and so, since I was a kid, I was always exploring. I was always trying to cross my neighborhood, even though my parents didn't want me to. And just trying to see what was out there.

So it was something that I've always had as a child and then somehow I became an accountant, which I felt didn't allow me to explore the way I was. And then when I got into writing I just felt like it allowed me to do that because all I needed was really a computer and an internet connection and I was able to write pretty much from anywhere.

And as a self published author, it's easy to get yourself published these days on Kindle and other platforms and again, all you need is an internet connection to be able to do that.

James Blatch: And what did you start writing?

Kam Knight: I started writing first in the personal development genre. So I was writing books about tools that I was using myself. Like self-talk and visualization and goal setting.

The reason I started writing in that is because there's a lot of cool tools out there that can help you perform better, and I just felt like they weren't being explained well or they weren't being taught in the best way.

So when I started writing, I was trying to fill a gap in the material that was out there. My earlier stuff, thanks to the Kindle platform, did quite well.

Mainly because, like I said, I got into writing about 10 years ago and at that time, nobody was on the Kindle platform and if you wanted a book on a topic that I had written, it was the only book available. So just for that, it did well.

I can't say I was great at that point, I was still learning the ropes. At the time, there were no Mark Dawson's and others teaching people how to self publish, so all the learning curve was on your own.

But I was really glad that I put some of my earlier stuff up there because when you get success, when people are buying your stuff, and you get positive reviews, it just motivates you to continue doing it. It validates you and you start feeling like, "Okay, I'm a writer now."

James Blatch: Yeah, and that's definitely an advantage of being an early adopter. We have had quite a few people on the podcast who started at around that time.

Even if you started as late as something like 2011, 2012, you're still in that early tranche and getting visibility, perhaps easier than today. But that's not

to say that if you don't get that immediate success today that, that should be the end of it, you do have to persevere.

I can certainly see the advantage of getting some positive sales and reviews early on.

Kam Knight: Right, and I do encourage everyone to persevere because if it is a passion, then it really opens the doors for you in what you can do, not just in your career, but in your personal life.

I just want to comment on what you said about, even if you got in around 2011 or 2012, even 2012, it was really huge. I remember around that time is when KDP Select came out and back then, you could set a free promotion for a book and thousands and thousands of people to download your book.

I remember I did a KDP Select back in December, maybe November of 2012 and I had a book and this was with no marketing and no BookBub. I must have gotten over 20,000 downloads.

James Blatch: Wow, that is incredible, and I think Mark had a good experience in those early days when suddenly it all took off for him. So they were the self help books early on and have you continued with that?

Have you moved into fiction?

Kam Knight: No, I haven't moved into fiction, I'm more into mental performance. I write more on improving memory, enhancing concentration, mind mapping and things of that nature. I haven't dabbled much in the fiction realm yet and I think your audience really is majority fiction, correct?

James Blatch: Yeah, I think so. It's a very common question we get asked every day of the week by people from our audiences, "How do I market

non-fiction?" And it's an area we're very interested in, SPF is non-fiction organization, it's something we think about a lot.

It is an area we're moving into more and more, non-fiction.

Kam Knight: I suspect down the road, there'll be a lot more non-fiction authors buying your course.

I've been following the podcast, and I'm getting a lot of good information, even though I'm a non-fiction author. There's a lot of information that's very helpful.

You guys did a podcast, I think it was podcast 85 with Katie Cross, talking about imposter syndrome. And I think imposter syndrome is much bigger for non-fiction authors because we're giving people advice, and a lot of what we deal with is, "Who am I to give this advice or why do I feel like somebody should listen to me?"

So imposter syndrome is huge, and I know you guys did a recent podcast about reviews, and we all experience negative reviews. I think a lot of what you're doing is very helpful for non-fiction, and I could see more and more people coming to you guys, so it would be another avenue.

James Blatch: That's good to hear. Thank you Kam.

We should talk about the rewards of getting this right. In your case, you wanted to travel, you had this lust in your mind and with the best one in the world, 20 days annual leave as an accountant's probably not gonna cut it in terms of quenching that. So this has been a fantastic release for you.

Kam Knight: Well in the States you'd be lucky if you get 20 days. You get 10 days.

James Blatch: That's incredible, we get like 25 normal in the UK.

Even so, so this has been an incredible opportunity for you to change your life and see things and experience things, that you could only have dreamt of a few years ago.

Kam Knight: Right, and speaking of imposter syndrome. If you have imposter syndrome in one area of your life, more than likely, it's going to translate into other areas. And for me, it went into the area of travel 'cause when I was experiencing some amazing things.

Scuba diving with hammerhead sharks in the Galápagos Islands or swimming with 10 meter long whale shark in the Bay Islands of Honduras. At one point, I was like, "What did I do to deserve this? Why do I feel like I should have that?" And there was some self-sabotage going on at that time as well. My mind was going, "Okay, now it's time to stop, you've experienced so much."

And just the way we're raised, we're felt to feel like maybe this kind of life isn't meant for us, or it's too much, or we're being selfish. But if you have the opportunity, why not take it? Writing afforded that opportunity, so I really went for it.

When these moments came up of the imposter syndrome or the self-sabotage, I really had to work to make sure that I wasn't going to let it stop me. And so, in the early part of my journey, I had the month six mark and at the month 12 mark and at the month 18 mark, I was feeling a lot of that like, "Okay, you've done enough, it's time for you to go back. You've experienced life enough."

But then I was just like, "Well, I'm just going to see how far I can take it." And I just kept going until I actually wanted to stop, not because I felt like I needed to stop.

James Blatch: Yeah, that's incredible, and it's so true, it's amazing how far this self-sabotaging mindset goes. I get it just going to the cinema. If I sit in

the cinema, I start to feel kind of guilty that I'm there and that I should be doing something else. It's crazy, crazy mind stuff going on, but Mark gets the same thing.

As you say, you book a nice flight, and you want to go somewhere, and you do have this sort of vague, nagging feeling that you shouldn't be doing it.

I would love to get rid of that 100%, can you help me with that?

Kam Knight: I give you permission to enjoy your life to the fullest extent as possible.

James Blatch: Permission granted.

Kam Knight: And the reason I say that is because I feel like we're waiting for somebody to give us permission, you know what I'm saying? We're waiting for someone to say, "Okay, this is okay for you to do." And I'm letting everybody listening to this podcast and yourself know that you have permission to do this.

James Blatch: Permission granted from Kam, thank you. That's great. Okay, let's talk a little bit about the travel 'cause you've listed off some incredible things that you've done.

What have been your highlights?

Kam Knight: Yeah, you would think, but I think what you experience out in the world, how I would equate to art or music, is there a particular song that you really, really like James? I would suspect that you have a favorite song, but there's not just one song that you could say is your all time favorite.

I've explored a lot of art when I was traveling and that's why I'm saying this, is that no one experience could ever top another. There's so many unique experiences that you will experience when you're traveling, and you'll get

to a point where you'll be like, "Wow, I can't imagine anything topping that."

And a month later, I had something that topped that, and a month later after that, I had something that topped that. Experience is such that there isn't one thing that you could say it's the best. But if I were to narrow it down, I would say when I was scuba diving in the Galápagos Islands.

It was amazing because it was straight out of an underwater documentary that you would see maybe on the Planet Earth TV documentaries or whatnot. There were just schools of fishes everywhere, there were spotted rays, other manta rays, there were sea turtles, giant ones. And that's all that I had seen, I would've been very much satisfied.

But then, five minutes later, we were at a coral wall and all of a sudden, it must have been like an invasion of hammerhead sharks that came over the coral wall and hammerhead sharks glide in the water like they own it 'cause they're on the top of the food chain. The way they glided looked like they were bombers that were coming overhead.

So we had about ... I couldn't count, maybe nine or 10 hammerhead sharks that came over the coral wall. And hammerheads and most sharks, they're very curious creature, and although they know, humans aren't something they want to eat, but they're really curious.

They'll just swim like that, they just come up to you and we had those sharks and a bunch of other sharks kind of swimming around us, and it was such an amazing experience.

I remember getting back on land, thinking, "Wow, I can't imagine anything topping that." But then, after I left the Galápagos, I was in Ecuador and I saw a sign for a tour to the Amazon and it was a great price, it was 250 bucks for a four night, three day or a four day, three night excursion into the Amazon where we saw six meter long anacondas. A whole host of

monkeys, like spider monkeys, and we went piranha fishing, we did night hikes, we saw alligators, it was just incredible. So that's really been kind of my life the last six years.

James Blatch: You've spent quite a lot of time near some fairly dangerous creatures, not the hammerhead sharks, but the piranas and anacondas and so and you must have had a few moments here and there as well along the way, that weren't necessarily straightforward for you.

Kam Knight: What do you meant by that, straightforward?

James Blatch: Well, what I mean is you were scared.

Did anything get hairy at any point? Have you feared for your life at any of these moments?

Kam Knight: It was weird, around six years ago I was a bit arrogant, I guess and I didn't have so much fear back then, but now when I look back at it, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, what did I do? I shouldn't have been too ambitious."

At the time I wasn't too scared, I was just like, whatever the world had to offer I was just so excited to experience it and just go out and do it.

For some reason I figured if these tour companies are taking people out there, there must be some sort of safety to it. So I just kind of trusted the universe to, for everything to go smoothly.

James Blatch: Yeah, and it did, okay. So when you were doing this traveling, was this a bit like holiday traveling in that you were based in Chicago, you'd look for your next trip, you'd book it and you'd go on it?

Or did you just sort of set off and go from one place to another?

Kam Knight: This wasn't holiday traveling at all. I rarely came back to the States, so I was just moving from one spot to the next.

I had started my journey in Columbia and I had worked my way up through Central America into Guatemala. Then I went back into South America and then I explored all the countries over there.

Then I flew out to Asia and then to Australia and New Zealand and then I went to Africa, explored pretty much most of South and East Africa. I came into Europe and did pretty much most of the countries out in Europe and when I had done all the continents, I just kind of was going back and forth and went back into Africa, came back to Europe and yeah.

So it wasn't vacation at all, it was just me being on the road the whole time, living pretty much a completely nomadic life.

James Blatch: You must have spent a lot of time sitting in high consulates and embassies, queuing for visas.

Kam Knight: You know, as Swiss, American, British, we're very fortunate because we have a very strong passport. So I think it is one of the strongest passports that allows us to get into the most countries.

Luckily visas weren't too much of an issue, but I was standing a long time at border crossings to get my stamp into the country.

James Blatch: I just did a bit of traveling for the BBC and in the end I worked out that the worst thing you could do, particularly Africa, I noticed, the worst thing you could do is apply for anything. The best thing you can do is turn up off the airplane with your passport, and you always get in.

Once you start the application process, it never ends for some of those countries. But yeah, I'm incredibly jealous, I think that it's one of those things that most of us have lives that don't easily allow us to be away for

long periods of time. 'Cause there'll even be self-published writers listening to this who've got children to get to school in the morning and back home in the evening.

I haven't asked you if you're married, or you got kids?

Kam Knight: No, I'm not married, and I don't have kids, luckily, but I have met quite a few people who have traveled as a couple and who have even traveled with kids. I don't want people to think that you have to be single to enjoy a life like that.

And it can be actually more advantageous if you are with somebody because being on the road alone, there were times when I was kind of on my own for an extended period of time. And if you're traveling as a couple or even with kids, that can be a safe respite from those periods.

James Blatch: When you've been away, have you continued to run your writing and publishing career?

Kam Knight: Yes, I was very much into it, especially in the first couple of years of my journey. I was still writing, and I was still focused on getting my work out there.

And like I had mentioned, I was quite lucky that I was able to get into the Kindle platform quite early, so at that time, really, all you had to do was publish the book, and you would get some sort of sales and if you tweaked your keywords and use the KDP Select at that times, you could really generate a lot of sale.

So I was very fortunate, where I didn't have to do too much marketing, but I was still writing quite a bit. I think the first three years, I still wrote two or three books during that time.

James Blatch: So you were doing that on the road with laptop and every now and again find an internet connection and do a bit of marketing and tweaking?

Kam Knight: Yes, and you'd be surprised, but internet connection is very strong all over the world, even in second and third world countries, even in places where you would think there would be no internet connection.

But this globalization has been really huge in the last 10 years and there's almost no place where you can't find internet connection. In fact, a few years ago, I was in a taxi in Peru and the guy's like, "If you need WiFi, I've got WiFi in this taxi." I was shocked. I'm like, "That's crazy."

You'll never be without internet connection and because you'll never be without an internet connection, you always have the opportunity to work, tweak your marketing and whatnot. And if you are out of internet connection, that's great because then now you have time to write.

James Blatch: Yeah, that's a blessed sign as well.

Where are you now with your writing? Have you effectively stopped producing new books now?

Kam Knight: When I returned to Chicago a few months ago, I had decided that I was gonna end my travels for a little bit. And at that time I had written eight books and so in the last six months, I've been working on two more books.

One book on concentration, and another one on speed reading, and I'm almost done with those two books. I think I will have about 10 non-fiction books, and I feel like that's enough.

I didn't focus too much time and energy on marketing. The last six years I was traveling and so, this now, is where I really wanna get more into the

marketing and this is really how I discovered Self Publishing Formula, and some of the other guys who are in this field.

James Blatch: Good, well let's talk a little bit about the focus stuff because funny enough, we're mid course launch at the moment. I have just spent an hour working on my book, and I was supposed to do that this morning, and it's taken all day and to the point where I thought, "I've just got to start doing this."

I do find it difficult to knuckle down when there are so many distractions on at the moment. And I think this is an area that you've been thinking about a bit.

Kam Knight: When you're on the road, you have a lot of downtime, when you're waiting for flights at the airport, when you're on long bus rides, a lot of my travel was an overnight bus journeys.

In between those times is the best time for writing, at least for me. I find when I'm doing something completely outside just sitting in front of a computer to write, that's when I get my best ideas.

I've always had my phone on me and I always have a trusty app, where I can write on. Right now I'm using Evernote because it allows me to sync across desktop and my phone very seamlessly and so anytime I have a good idea or any time I have downtime, that's when I'm writing. Even if I'm just on the Metro for a little bit. I'll get a lot of good writing done in those times. And when I think back about it.

Really, a lot of my writing was done on downtime. I wasn't spending too much time saying, okay, I have to sit down for a few hours or a few days and pump out X amount of words because I was doing so many other things.

Where it was really helpful for me was to be able to use that down time I had and make sure I used it wisely and got a lot of stuff done and it seems

on the surface, "Oh yeah, Kam says of course he used down time." But down time are those times when you don't want to write and so you really have to condition yourself to be able to get yourself to pull out your phone or pull out your laptop when you're not doing something and start writing.

Once you've conditioned yourself, they start to become pretty easy. So by around year two or three it was fairly easy for me to put words onto paper and get things published.

James Blatch: You made it a habit rather than a chore, just a part and parcel of what you did. You got on the bus, got on the plane, sat down at the terminal, whatever, waiting, laptop out.

Kam Knight: Yeah, and I'm glad you used the word habit because I did make it a habit because now, when I have downtime, because it's a habit, it's just so natural for me to just pull out my phone and just take some notes on some ideas I had or just write until I get to my destination or the downtime is over.

And as I mentioned, that's really where I get some of my best ideas, when I'm not focused on trying to get my best ideas.

James Blatch: You do give yourself more opportunity to have good moments writing and good moments thinking, if you just do it a lot.

Kam Knight: Yeah, right.

James Blatch: I think it's a really important point.

You've come up with a book on this subject, right? How's the book structured? What are people going to get out of that?

Kam Knight: The subject of concentration?

James Blatch: Yeah.

Kam Knight: The book on concentration that I'm almost finished with, I've taken everything I've learnt in my journey as traveling as well as in writing and in other areas and everything I've learnt about the mind and how it works and it goes really deep, it goes deep into our thoughts, the things that distract us internally, like our thoughts, our mental images, our feelings, our impulses.

And being aware of it. Being aware that we have so many internal distractions that are going on, and the fact that we're not aware of it is where it gets all of its power.

And once we become aware that we have all these internal distractions and we know how those internal distractions will come up and how they will take us away from what we're trying to do. We have a lot more power to manage and handle them.

Then another part of the book focuses on techniques that you can use to just be much more focused and much more honed in on what you're trying to do. And if it's writing and if it's marketing, can really help somebody get a lot more work done in a lot less time because a lot of that internal distractions that we have aren't getting in the way.

I believe when it comes to concentration, the majority of our distractions are internal, we do have external, but those external distractions really affect our internal ones first and if we can manage all those things that are going inside of us, it's much easier to manage the external distractions.

James Blatch: That sounds really good.

Where are you in the publishing process with this book?

Kam Knight: I've just finished the first draft of it and I'm working on the second draft and I'm hoping to get it out to an editor and hopefully be done with it by the end of either June or July.

James Blatch: Okay, so soon. We'll look out for that.

Kam, you very kindly agreed to put together some helpful hints in a PDF that people can take away from this interview. Is that on the subject of focus and concentration?

Kam Knight: Yes, it's entirely on helping other authors and writers get more focused on being able to write more in a shorter period of time.

James Blatch: Okay, so I tell you what we'll do, as always I come up with these URLs off the top of my head, but let's call it selfpublishingformula.com/focus. It's a nice simple word and we'll liaise after the interview, you get that stuff to me.

And then I think if you can make sure on that PDF people know how they can follow you and are you a big social media guy, Kam?

When you're abroad can people follow these amazing events from you?

Kam Knight: Yeah, I do have social media, and I have a lot of pictures that I put up and a lot of stories behind it, but I never really put it out to the public. It was just for a lot of the friends I was meeting, and my friends back at home.

But if people in your audience are interested, I could set that up out there, and maybe put that in my book and give the link so they can see a lot of the cool, amazing things that is out in the world, that they too can experience.

James Blatch: I know that I'd love to see it, so I imagine some other people listening to this would love to see some of the images that you've brought back. Although I imagine the best thing you brought back are the memories and just those moments and the way you talked about that, that moment under the surface off the Galápagos Islands. You'll never forget that for the rest of your life.

Kam Knight: I'll never forget that, that was just incredible, yeah.

James Blatch: Okay, what a great example of what this new self publishing world can do as it changes publishing, it changes people as well. That's fantastic. Kam, thank you so much indeed for joining us.

Kam Knight: Alright, thank you very much.

James Blatch: I've really appreciated and enjoyed chatting to you and thank you very much for the handout, which I think is going to be very useful for people like me, who need to get rid of those internal distractions.

Kam Knight: Hopefully it will be useful for you because I know you're working on a book right now.

James Blatch: I am, I am. I'm plowing through it.

Kam Knight: Oh, so you're plowing through it, so that means it's going well?

James Blatch: I don't know, plowing, I sort of meant plowing is quite hard work at the moment.

I've been writing a very extended synopsis of it for quite a long time and I think I've spoken about this at length in the past, but every time I've come to it, I just spend a lot of time rewriting what I've written so far and I've got to be better, got to be more focused.

I am actually making progress at the moment, and I've given myself a deadline for having it published by April next year, so that gives me some time. I need to get it to the editor in the autumn, so I am making progress now.

Kam Knight: Well, the fact that you've set a deadline, that's huge because that's one of the techniques I teach, setting deadlines, and deadlines really help get you a little bit more focused and centers your energy and it keeps that end date in mind. So you're constantly aware, "Okay, I have to get this done by then." So that's good, that you always have a deadline.

James Blatch: I come from a newsroom environment where deadlines ruled our lives and they worked, they got stuff done, so.

Kam Knight: Yeah, yeah.

James Blatch: Kam, again, thank you so much indeed and we wish you well on your ... Bon Voyage I should say to you.

Kam Knight: Alright, thank you very much.

James Blatch: I told you he was a lovely guy really, quite softly spoken, but somebody who's obviously just had these amazing moments. He described that, I mentioned it again at the end of the interview, but that moment he was just under surface in the Galápagos Islands in this ... what's a collective noun for sharks? I guess a school 'cause they're fish, aren't they?

Mark Dawson: I guess so, yes. A murder, a murder of sharks.

James Blatch: A murder? That's not it surely. A school of hammerhead sharks appears and they are the most weird looking creatures anyway to see them on a TV documentary, let alone be in the water with nine or 10 or

them swimming around you and they're curious. And that's been unlocked for him.

What's been unlocked for you Mark by self-publishing?

Mark Dawson: Well, being asked to go and speak in Bali in January ... so going to Bali with Lucy and going to New York, going to Denver, going to Boston in the next six weeks or so.

You may not be able to tell, but I am really tired at the moment. It's been a very, very hard week. Speaking of focus, I found it very, very difficult to focus this morning.

Just so tired. So I'm actually going to go home and have a sleep. I've got a meeting at 03:00 till 04:00 and then we're going to go have a sleep. 'Cause we're doing a webinar tonight, which means that I won't be in bed until midnight.

I prefer to do that and not to have to remember when we were working together, to have to struggle through watching a film or other stuff and then get the train home to Salisbury and crawl back into the house.

To be able to be the master of my own schedule, as I am right now, is pretty cool. To see the kids and all those amazing things that are able to do now.

James Blatch: I completely agree with that, I think it's a very subtle thing that when you're working in that kind of 09:00 to 05:00 environment, which we were.

There were days when the last thing in the world you wanted to do was to get out of bed, get on the train, go in. I think when you do that relentlessly, particularly if you're not particularly enjoying it, it's really bad for your health for a start.

And the subtle difference about working from home and I can talk about this because although I'm not a successful self-published author, but I have successfully left the 09:00 to 05:00 and run my own businesses from a shed in the garden, which is the same result really.

The fact that you can frankly, have a lie in, have a nap occasionally, pace your life much more healthily around you and I'm quite happy to work into the evening because I'm a bit of a night bird, which doesn't really suit the BBC where we used to work or many other companies. And that sounds small, but for me, just tuning into your body a little bit more and working like that, is a huge, huge difference.

It was funny when Lucy set up that interview and she was raving about it, just from having a couple of conversations with Kam and I can see why now. And he starts it off, he's quite quietly spoken, but I thought it was a really, really lovely interview to listen to and we all need that every now and again, that little glimpse into what can be if we get this bit right.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely, no, I agree and one of the things we thinking about doing later this year is if few more kind of lifestyle videos, that we'll put on our YouTube channel, with what's possible these days, doing what we do. So watch this space for a little more like that from us.

James Blatch: Yeah, actually, ConvertKit recently did a crowd-sourced book, which I haven't got yet.

Mark Dawson: I Am A Blogger.

James Blatch: Yeah, I Am A Blogger.

Mark Dawson: Yes, I've seen that, I haven't seen it, but I knew they were doing it.

James Blatch: Although it's not out yet, so I did contribute and actually, I've bought a copy of it in the crowd sourced thing for my daughter and she should pass it to her because I don't want her to be trapped in a 09:00 to 05:00 if she doesn't want to do that.

I want her to understand that you growing ... 'cause schools are slow to adapt, right? Schools and universities are not going to be preaching any of the stuff we're talking about. They're going to be talking about the traditional industries and traditional type of job and the person, the career guidance person you're gonna see is not gonna say, "Oh, don't worry about that, just go on the internet and start a business." But I want her to understand that there are alternatives for her.

Mark Dawson: I remember when I was 14 or 15 I went to the career guidance counselor at school and there was a questionnaire I had to fill out and I think it came back something like bin man for me, I'm not kidding. Something like bin man.

And then of course I was a lawyer and to think about what we do now, just basically kind of create words, create money and an income and a business from the stuff that floats around in our head, would that be what we're doing right now. Podcasting courses, community building, that kind of thing or writing books. It's very remarkable, more than possible, not easy, but within reach for most people these days.

James Blatch: You realize, from now, whenever we're in a room together, I'm going to ask you to empty the bins and take them out.

Mark Dawson: Well, yeah.

James Blatch: You're good at it actually, quite thorough.

And don't forget that you need focus and concentration of course to make this lifestyle work and to happen and you can learn more about that and

some tips from the man himself, from Kam. If you go to selfpublishingformula.com/focus and also, Kam promises to include a link there to the photographs from his travels, 'cause he talked in really vivid detail about some of those experiences, it would be great to see some of those photographs as well.

Thank you very much indeed. I'm going to be absolutely shattered next week, as we get back after flying around the world and then we have our annual general meeting, which does involve a nice hotel and meal, but is also going to be us planning the next year one afternoon.

It's going to be busy, but we love it, so we're not gonna complain. Good, Mark, thank you very much indeed.

Mark Dawson: Thank you James.

James Blatch: Thank you much indeed for listening, have a great week writing, and a great week marketing your books and we'll speak to you next Friday, bye bye.

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