

EPISODE 134: A SUCCESSFUL AUTHOR MINDSET – WITH ADAM CROFT

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

James Blatch: Hello, and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula Podcast with James Blatch and Mark Dawson from sunny England. We don't know what the weather's like, because we're now recording for next week, but let's pretend it's sunny.

Mark Dawson: Glorious.

James Blatch: Just, are going to try and not start every podcast with a chat about the weather. Let's try and not do that from now on.

Mark Dawson: As Elmore Leonard said, you shouldn't start any book about the weather either, so we should probably avoid that completely.

James Blatch: It was a dark and stormy night.

Mark Dawson: Yes, Mr. Cliché, James "cliché" Blatch.

James Blatch: I can tell you now that in my book, there was no gunning an engine or killing an engine when somebody turns it off.

Mark Dawson: I don't know where that came from. I do that sometimes. It's very annoying. It's one of those phrases that just kind of slips in.

James Blatch: I think Da Vinci Code man does that a lot as well, doesn't he?

Mark Dawson: Yes. We could go into that, but we'll be nice. We'll be nice to Mr. Brown.

James Blatch: Well, I think he's an amazing guy.

Right, welcome to the podcast, and we're going to say welcome to our Patreon listeners, so thank you very much indeed if you've been to patreon.com/SPFPodcast to support us.

Remember the Gold level Patreon subscribers have a chance to be selected for our book laboratory, book lab, and we are about to announce the third incarnation, the third selection for that in a moment.

First of all, I want to say a very warm welcome to Dan Shields from Essex in the United Kingdom, to Jennifer Ellison from Florida, Daniel McCleggan from Georgia in the United States of America. These are all Gold people. Rebecca Price from Michigan, and Kristin Etheridge from Texas in the USA. And Deborah Hart. Not sure where Deborah's from. We say welcome to her, and also the two latest, Stephen Davidson from Leicestershire in the United Kingdom, and Loretta Rose from British Columbia, Canada. Thank you very much indeed.

You can go to patreon.com/SPFPodcast. Support this podcast, and also be in with the chance of winning access to our courses, and all sorts of things. You get a pin, I think, if you're a Gold-level subscriber?

Mark Dawson: Yeah.

James Blatch: Have you got your pin? Where's my pin? I don't know where my pin is. Where's my pin?

Mark Dawson: I gave away a lot of them in Denver.

James Blatch: Yeah? You did.

Mark Dawson: Very nice. They were very popular.

James Blatch: We'll give some more away in Florida if people come and see us in Florida. In fact, I should say that is something we can say, Mark.

We're going to be at NINC in Florida, in September. If I have a look at the calendar, we can pluck out of thin air a night when, if you come and find us, you'll get a pin and a beer.

Mark Dawson: And you'll get drunk.

James Blatch: You will get drunk, because that is an SPF tradition. We don't have a problem.

Mark Dawson: Your tradition.

James Blatch: Yeah. Hey, who's the one who turned up late and half-cut in New York?

Mark Dawson: That might have been me.

James Blatch: We're going to be at NINC from Tuesday the 25th, so I'm going to designate-

Mark Dawson: Wednesday the 26th.

James Blatch: So Wednesday the 26th.

I'm going to designate Wednesday the 26th in the Shark Tooth Tavern as our night. Now, it might be, because I know that the ... who else organized? There's two or three other drinks dos get organized around there. There's the karaoke of course from our friends over at Draft2Digital. They use the Shark Tooth Tavern as well.

I should probably check with them first about this, but ultimately we could probably combine it. We'll just chuck some money into their bar bit as well.

We'll all be in the Shark Tooth Tavern on the 26th of September. The Shark Tooth Tavern is St. Pete Beach, which is close to Tampa. A really beautiful part of the world, actually, on the beach there. And it's part of the complex of the Trade Winds resort, Trade Winds Hotel Resort.

And you're presenting this year?

Mark Dawson: I am doing two sessions, one on launching, and one on Amazon ads. I've just got to get those prepared next month when I get a bit of spare time.

James Blatch: Good. I'm presenting on a live video.

Mark Dawson: Oh, God.

James Blatch: It's going to be amazing. There's a bona fide author involved in the presentation process. And, I think Nick and Jo are both going to NINC this year, are they not?

Mark Dawson: Nick Stephenson and Joanna Penn. Yeah, I think so. Joanna definitely is. As far as I know, Nick is. Yes.

James Blatch: Good. Well, it'll be the British triumvirate in one place. I've never actually met Nick. I speak to him a lot.

Mark Dawson: He's very nice.

James Blatch: Looking forward to that. Good. Okay, so if you get a chance to join us in Florida, you'll be very welcome.

Mark Dawson: Oh, if he wants to give you a lift ...

James Blatch: No.

Mark Dawson: No.

James Blatch: I'm not getting in his car. I've seen the photographs.

Mark Dawson: Don't do that. It's dangerous.

James Blatch: Yeah, he did crash. In weather like this, he did crash his Maserati. Good. Okay look, let's announce the winner. Or not winner, but the person who's been selected as our latest book lab person.

Mark Dawson: Guinea pig. May not be the winner. Could actually be we just select the loser, depending on how it goes.

James Blatch: Yes. Exactly. Well, so far, the answer has been that it's positively-received with some good hints and tips. But that doesn't mean that we're not going to have somebody selected at some point for whom the experts say, "You need to change this whole sale thing." So who knows? But the whole point is that we learn something from it.

Mark Dawson: There you go, yes. So it is Gretchen S.B. is the author, and the book is called 'Lady of the Dead'. There you go.

James Blatch: I've got it up on the screen, now. Gretchen S.B., yes. Okay, good. That looks like fantasy to me, medieval fantasy maybe?

Mark Dawson: No. I think urban fantasy would be my guess.

James Blatch: Okay.

Mark Dawson: But the fact that you've had to ask that suggests there's going to be some useful tips for her, when it comes to cover and things like that.

James Blatch: Yeah. In fact, it does say 'A Paranormal Romance' in small letters on the front cover. So it'll be interesting to see what period it's set in, looking at the cover.

Gretchen, congratulations. You are going into the lab. Don't get too nervous. I shall be interviewing about the cover, about the editorial inside, and what else do we do?

Mark Dawson: The blurb.

James Blatch: Blurb with Brian. That's coming up, and that episode will probably come up in October. End of September, beginning of October. We've got all that together. Good.

Author mindset. How do you get yourself in the right frame of mind, Mark, for writing and producing books?

Mark Dawson: I just sit down at my desk and start writing. This is my business. I don't have to work too hard to do it.

When I started, it would have been a bit more difficult I suppose. It's easy when you're making sales and you're getting reviews, and you're getting emails. You like all of those things, so you want to do more of that.

But when you're starting out, it can feel like you're writing on your own. I remember what that felt like, and getting a book out there and then having no idea whether anyone was buying it and reading it, or enjoying it.

It is more challenging in those early days, so any kind of advice that we can give, or Adam can give as to how to get yourself going, is a good thing. You're in that situation now.

James Blatch: Yeah. And it's not just about motivation to write. It's also about the mindset needed to be a modern indie author, to switch onto a business mind as well, and to an extent treat your books as third-party products that you're then marketing rather than get too emotional about it, which I think helps that process.

Adam Croft has been very successful. Regular listeners of the podcast will be familiar with his story, but he goes through a little bit of it at the beginning of the podcast interview. He does a lot of thinking about getting that frame of mind right, basically, the frame of mind needed to be successful.

Now one small thing, if you're one of our YouTube listeners, there was a rare failure of the video site at my end, so our ScreenFlow system did not record Adam's beautiful good looks down the line.

We've put a still in of him instead, unfortunately. But I'm live, and the audio is absolutely perfect. So no visuals on the YouTube channel for Adam, unfortunately for this episode, but a very well-worth-listening-to interview. So let's hear from Adam.

Adam Croft. Welcome back to the SPF Podcast. You're not stranger to this particular podcast, are you?

Adam Croft: No. I think it's my third appearance now, which is not bad going. I'm happy.

James Blatch: We're 130 odd episodes in, so that's a pretty good ratio.

Adam Croft: Yeah.

James Blatch: You were a very early success of Mark's courses, but your story in its own right has been inspirational and fascinating to people.

You worked away for many years, and was able to buy an extra loaf of bread on occasions, some weeks, and then suddenly it all happened for you.

Adam Croft: Literally some weeks. The course came at the right time for me. It was about the time I started to change the way I was thinking about things and taking the writing seriously, rather than it just being a hobby.

I knew from the start I was going to have to do marketing, and it was going to have to be a business. But knowing that and actually engaging my brain to do that were two separate things.

The course came around about the time I started to realize that I was going to have to change the way I did things. It was just ideal, the timing, really.

James Blatch: The book that you dug out you thought would work well, the idea of the book you thought would work well for the advertising, has worked extremely well. 'Her Last Tomorrow'.

Is that still going well, the book?

Adam Croft: It's still going very well. Amazon bought that through their Thomas and Mercer imprint a couple years ago, and I just got the rights back to that this June, so that's now back with me and all of my books are now self-published again.

It was my biggest-selling book that I had. It did absolutely phenomenally, and just very recently actually, it's been overtaken by a book that I had out in January, which again was another one with a very marketable hook, another psychological thriller that I just put up Facebook ads for.

Very much the same tactic or the same strategy as I had for 'Her Last Tomorrow', which is now only three years ago. So that still works. The formula still applies. And that book 'Tell Me I'm Wrong' is now my biggest-selling book. That's actually overtaken 'Her Last Tomorrow'.

James Blatch: Congratulations, that's great to hear.

Adam Croft: Thank you.

James Blatch: Ever since I've been involved in this game, which is probably about the three-year point, a bit longer, I hear people saying, "Oh, Facebook ads don't work anymore. They used to work, but they don't work anymore."

But that's not really the case, is it?

Adam Croft: It's not. It's more difficult now than it was. There are more people doing it, and not just in the author sphere, but worldwide in every other industry.

Don't forget, when you're targeting Facebook ads at a reader of crime fiction, for example, they are not just a reader of crime fiction. They might be an early adopter of technology. They might be a horse rider as well. They might be a car driver. People in those other industries are also targeting that same person.

So when you're competing for ad space on that person's timeline, you're not just competing with other authors and publishers. It's everyone else

who wants to reach that person, for whatever reason, whatever their hobbies and interests, and things they're likely to spend money on are.

It's become more competitive, definitely. But there are more people on Facebook. There are more people on the planet, so that audience will keep growing, too. You've got to be savvy and you've got to think of a different way of doing things.

James Blatch: That's a good point. We'd prefer it if people just had the one interest. It makes it easier for us.

Adam Croft: It would make things a lot easier if you had just a crime reader or just a horse rider.

James Blatch: If only people would conform to advertising needs.

Adam Croft: Yes. Just stick to one hobby guys, it's a lot easier that way.

James Blatch: How hard is that?

We're going to talk about mindset and your new books. You're the perfect person to talk about this subject, and we'll come onto that in a mo.

One quick area I want to explore with you is, I know, and you mentioned it just now, that you went into a Thomas and Mercer contract. Now, for a lot of people, that's a big moment for them when Amazon or anyone, any publisher, comes knocking on your door and says, "We want to give you some money in return for your books." And you go into that.

You've come out of it, and I think it didn't work in the way that you wanted it to work, did it?

Adam Croft: Well, it did and it didn't. It could have been a lot better.

At the time, I didn't have a whole lot to lose. They wanted to take 'Her Last Tomorrow', which was a good few months old, and I was starting to kind of run to the point where I'd kind of exhausted a lot of the Facebook audience. It had been shown literally millions of times, the advert, and I was starting to run out of audience and starting to lose a bit of steam with it.

And they wanted to pay me a nice amount of money to take it on and relaunch it. I did some editing on it, and changed bits and added new chapters, and they relaunched it under their own brand.

They also wanted to take on a book that became 'Only The Truth', which was not really a psychological thriller. It kind of was, -ish. But it was much more male. My audience is kind of 70-odd percent female, so I knew I was going to have a bit of an issue. Not an issue, launching it to them, but it was much more of a male book.

It's kind of a cross-borders, running away from people, spying and all of this stuff. So it was a little bit of a departure from what I normally do, and the thought of having Amazon doing the marketing and placement for that for me appealed. So yeah, I took the money and ran, basically.

That book did very well. It hit number one store-wide in the US, in the UK. It meant that for a couple of days, Amazon had me listed as their most-widely-read author in the world, with JK Rowling in second place, so I took a lot of screenshots of that immediately. That was all very nice.

But yeah, for me, the thing about independent publishing is having the control, being able to do things yourself.

What I couldn't do is run any ads of those books, because my publishing contract didn't give me a 70% royalty, like Amazon KDP does. So immediately, my profit margin then is heavily, heavily squeezed.

Anyone watching this and listening to this will know that, when you're advertising on Facebook, the margins can be very slim anyway when you're on 70%. So when you're on a traditional deal, it's even slimmer and even harder to make a profit, to the point where I just didn't bother to advertise them.

When the books got a little older and Amazon stopped advertising them because understandably they've got new authors, new flavor of the month comes in, new books they want to push, mine aren't going to be at the front of the queue.

That's the same with any author and any publisher. Books age in that sense. But when you're an indie, they don't necessarily, because you can carry on advertising. You can carry on doing AMS, carry on doing Facebook ads, and reaching the readers that you didn't reach before.

James Blatch: It goes back to an early point that we make about this, is that traditional publishing is definitely there for some people and it's the right choice for some people.

But if you've got anything about you in terms of wanting to run your own marketing, nobody is going to work harder to market your book than you. That doesn't matter how excited the traditional publisher is.

Even if it's Amazon, nobody is going to be 100% focused on your books in the way that you are.

Adam Croft: No. I've always said that I don't think traditional publishing is going to die. I think it's got a very, very important place, because a lot of authors, a large number of them, do not want to do the marketing. They don't want to do the business side of things, and the PR and all of that.

They want to write the books, send it to somebody, and they're happy if somebody else takes a cut of the money to do that. That's absolutely fine.

But of course the lines are being blurred a lot more now. There are people on traditional deals who have to do a large amount of their own marketing. I know god knows how many authors, a large, large number of them, traditionally published, big names, and they still have to do a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to marketing and advertising.

They're expected to go out and find their own opportunities, and to do all their own social media and all of this stuff. So the lines are becoming a lot more blurred.

I think even if you've got a traditional deal, you're still going to be expected, even if you've become one of the big names, you're still expected to do a large amount of the marketing yourself.

James Blatch: You are one of the big names, Adam.

Adam Croft: Not in the traditional world.

James Blatch: Well, in the publishing world. As you say, the lines have blurred.

Adam Croft: I hope so, yeah.

James Blatch: Let's move onto mindset, because you are somebody who's got a good work ethic.

I know that because in fact, our very first time I met you, you talked about bum on seat, hands on keyboard, as being a central tenet of being a successful writer, of getting on with stuff.

What has led you to the point of writing a book about this subject?

Adam Croft: I get asked questions a lot, and I receive a lot of emails from authors. I always reply and try and help them, and give them the time, because that wasn't there when I started out in 2009, 2010.

The community was so young. There were no people who had been there and done it. So I always try to help where I can.

But for me, I noticed that 90% of what I was being asked had a root somewhere much further back than the actual question that was being asked, if you see what I mean. There were fundamentals there that needed to be sorted out first. And that seems to come down to mindset.

People's way of thinking about things, and approaching things, was wrong.

For example, we spoke about the success I had with 'Her Last Tomorrow'. When the adverts really took off for that, I had to ramp up the spend, because everything I was spending was doubling or trebling its money.

So I don't want to spend £10 a day. I want to spend £100 a day or £1,000 a day, because I'm going to get a lot more money back out of that. Even to this day, I still get a lot of messages from people saying, "Oh, I applaud what you did, but I couldn't have done that. I couldn't have taken that risk."

The fact is, there was no risk. I could see the sales coming in, minute by minute. It's not like I was throwing £1,000 a day at it and not knowing what was coming back at the end of it.

I was watching the sales roll in, as they were happening. There was no risk there. The money was there, and it was coming in. It's just a two-month delay before Amazon actually give it to you.

I realized that was just one symptom of the fact that a lot of people don't have the right way of thinking about approaching their writing careers.

James Blatch: I can remember that bit with you, actually, because I think we visited you, and you'd maxed out all your credit cards, and I think most of your family's credit cards.

Adam Croft: Yeah.

James Blatch: As you say, on the face of it to some people that sounds like a risk. Some people are risk-averse to even the idea of risk. But the reality was, you have black-and-white sales in front of you. There was just a time lag.

In fact, I think you almost possibly even asked me and John Dyer whether we had any space on our credit cards, at this stage. You were shoveling money in, knowing that there was a sure thing.

Adam Croft: I think I frisked you at the front door, if I remember rightly.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Adam Croft: The data was there in front of me. The sales from that day, from the previous day, what was being spent. The fact that the sales kept increasing every time the spend increased, it was there. It was spreadsheets, it was graphs.

However I looked at the data, interpreted it, it was there. And people I spoke to looked at it and said, "Yeah, this is working. You're printing money, here." Rather than me going out and getting more credit cards at 20% or whatever, I went to family and friends and said, "Do you fancy 5% or 10% back on top of this in two months' time?"

There's no savings account in the world that will give you that. So, it just kind of worked for everyone, really. Again, that was having that business mindset, and trusting the data.

Rather than seeing things as a risk, it was just common sense that, if I'm spending a pound, I'm getting three pounds back. I don't want to spend a pound. I want to spend £100, £1,000, because then I'm going to get two or three thousand pounds back.

A lot of the time, things in publishing, and self-publishing particularly, don't seem to follow conventional logic.

For example, I know Mark is a big advocate of read-through, and that's something that I'm a lot with at the moment. I'll be advertising book one, and seemingly losing loads of money on it. But I know the percentage of people who read through to book three, book four ...

My main series has got eight books in it now. I know that if somebody buys my first book at £1.99, if I'm advertising, yeah. I might lose a pound or two in advertising each time, to get that sale. But I know I'm probably going to get seven or eight pounds, ten pounds back if they read through the series.

So it's changing that way of thinking and not necessarily having the knee jerk reaction that we're, perhaps, conditioned into having at certain times.

James Blatch: Is the mindset needed to write a book very different from the mindset needed to run a business?

Adam Croft: It is.

In the book I put it down into three types of mindset. There's a **professional** mindset, the **visionary** mindset and the **business** mindset, which are linked but very different.

The professional mindset, we are all professionals of what we do even if we are not full-time writers. We are professional something or others whether we work in a supermarket, whether we're mechanics or doctors or what we are professional at that.

We get up in the morning, we go there, we put the hours in, we come back and for the time we're there, hopefully, it is the thing that occupies our mind and gets our focus. We don't go off on social media an this, that and the other. Hopefully not anyway, we wouldn't last too long.

So, it's more than just about money and skill.

For example when I was researching for the book, I looked up what the OED said professionalism was. And it's got two definitions right next to each other. The first one is a person engaged in a specific activity, especially as a sport, as a main paid occupation, rather than as a past-time. So main paid occupation you think, okay, that defines professionalism.

But the very next line, alternative definition says, "A person competent or skilled in a particular activity." So no mention of money. You think, well, in that case, when do you become a professional writer?

People who are watching this, listening to this and writing in their spare time are already professional if they're competent or skilled at it, which if you're in the middle of writing a book, or you have written a book, you are.

So, essentially the vast majority of people already are professional and perhaps just don't realize it or haven't accepted that. It's just a matter of overcoming that doubt and fear that we all have when we're stepping into the unknown or going on some long journey and switching on the professional part of your brain.

James Blatch: This touches on the imposter syndrome that a lot of writers suffer from. It's that they don't see themselves as professional.

Adam Croft: No. We're all the same.

I was waiting to do this interview this morning, I'm sitting here, "Why do they want to speak to me? They've had me on three times now. At some point they're going to realize that I'm not all that."

And it's just daft because if I look at the fact and figures and things that I've achieved and done. I'm the first one to say look at what's in black and white, look at the figures and trust the data. But when it comes to me, I don't. I'm the worst as taking my own medicine.

Imposter syndrome and self doubt are linked but slightly different things. And they effect all sorts of people and scientifically speaking they do effect creatively minded people more, which I think is why so many authors do struggle with that.

James Blatch: I think there's something at play here as well to do with the changing nature of the economy and commerce. Is that when we were younger pretty much everyone had a 9:00 to 5:00 job. I mean, there was the odd sitcom about somebody who had won the pools or something and was idle. And they were presented as idle.

I noticed at our primary school there, was ... I've got to be careful of any kids who are watching this. But there was a couple, parents, who were always there dropping the kids off, always there picking the kids up, ambled very slowly backwards and forwards and people would have hushed conversations about what do they do?

I have no idea what he does. He probably works from home doing this sort of thing. He probably has a multi-million pound business. It's much more common now for people not to have a traditional 9:00 to 5:00 job.

And yet, I think a lot of people in this area or moving to this area still have that nagging thing, "I've opted out of society. I'm not doing this properly. I'm slightly embarrassed by the fact I haven't got a job." And it's ridiculous, right?

Adam Croft: There is a bit of that, still, because obviously I work from home, my wife works at home with me as well. And quite often I'll get a delivery person knocking at the door, or I'll have someone come around to do some work on the house and inevitably at some point they'll say, "Day off today, is it?" And I'll say, "No, no, I work from home." "Oh, right. What do you do?" Here we go again.

James Blatch: Yeah. Yeah.

Adam Croft: I'll try and explain this. The conversation I've had a million times before. But yeah, that is there, definitely.

But it is changing and people are kind of more often than not the response from people is, "God, I would love to be able to do that. That must be great. You're doing what you love doing and spending time doing that."

And all through my life if somebody said to me, "Look, you don't have to go out to work, you can stay at home and you can write books." I would have bitten their arm off. And I'm sure that's the same for people watching, listening to this. That's why they are because they're perhaps already at that point or trying to get to that point.

James Blatch: Yup.

Adam Croft: I think having the right mindset and the right basis and way of thinking about things. For example, I keep going back to the book, but it doesn't tell you how to think about and approach everything.

It doesn't really focus on marketing and advertising except from a principles point of view, because the thing about mindset is that basis, it is that starting point from which everything else comes. If you're thinking the right way about things, you don't need me to tell you what decision to make when one arises or what to do here or there. Once you've got those

foundations and those ways of thinking, everything else just falls in place around it. That's the beauty of it.

James Blatch: The professional mindset. You've divided it into three, and the professional mindset, and this applies absolutely as you pointed out, to people who are just starting out, who haven't published a book yet, who do have a traditional 9:00 to 5:00 job. They should still consider themselves professional when it comes to writing. That's an important mindset for them to have.

And what comes along with that, I guess Adam, is the type of discipline that you've displayed in getting stuff planned and done.

Adam Croft: It is. As you said earlier on in the interview, you remember one of the first things I said to you was about the discipline and sitting down and bum on seat, fingers on keyboard. They're the six words I always tell people when they ask me for writing advice summed up in one sentence. And it is.

You've got to sit down, you've got to write. And I'm sure there's nobody listening to this who hasn't heard that before.

But, the thing with writers and with creative people is we can be given that advice left, right and center, all the time. We know the right principles. We know what the right thing to do is, but actually doing it and having that motivation to sit down and do it and for that to actually be your way of thinking, rather than somebody else's that you're just going along with and copying, that's the key really.

It's changing the way that you actually think and approach things, rather than saying, "Adam Croft said I've got to do this. Mark Dawson said I should do this." You're not slavishly doing what somebody tells you to do. You're understanding the principles behind it and therefore thinking that, and having that motivation for yourself.

James Blatch: That's funny, you talk about having the motivation to do something, and I think about this a lot because I work from home as you do, in an office in the garden. Sweltering office in the garden at the moment.

And, I sometimes think about, a few friends say to me, "I couldn't do that. I haven't got the discipline to work from home." And I think, well, I've quite a big company to run, and if I don't do the work, things fall apart quite quickly. So it's a bit like having a 9:00 to 5:00 job.

Even if you don't enjoy your job, in fact, particularly it's example if you don't enjoy your job. You don't think, "I haven't got the motivation to go to work today." You go to work and you do your work.

There's got to be an element of that. It sounds boring, there's got to be an element of that in running your own business. You've got to think, "I don't need the motivation for it, this is what I do. And unless I'm going to make a massive change and do something different, I go into the office and I work today." And that for me is a mindset thing.

Adam Croft: Yes. I think there's something societal about that. I think people think that being a writer isn't a real job. You sit and you stare out of windows and you write stories.

James Blatch: And you ponder.

Adam Croft: Yes. A lot of chin rubbing.

And, if that is the issue and if you think that is what maybe makes you not put the hours in, then change your way of thinking about it. Don't call yourself a writer. Don't call yourself an author.

Call yourself a self publishing entrepreneur and say that you run an independent publishing company and you only publish your own books, but leave that bit for now.

Just change the way that you're thinking about it and approaching it. If a certain word or term gives you connotations that are changing the way that you work, because it is a job.

You're not writing stories just for fun, you're doing it to sell them and to provide an income for you and your family. So you have to think about it in the way that you would think about your full-time job or anything else that brings you an income.

James Blatch: Circling back around to the business side of things and having the right mindset for that.

The reason I asked you whether you thought it was a different mindset needed for writing a book, and doing the craft side of it and running a business is because I think it highlights the fact that some writers do struggle to think of themselves as the business people.

Mark gets emails quite a lot from people who you can tell are reluctant to do as you say, any of the kind of marketing grind and they see it as a chore and they don't really want to do it. For them the traditional industry, I guess, is available to them.

But for people who are not going to get traditional, who do need to run their own business, what advice would you give them for getting into that mindset of running a business?

Adam Croft: Even if they do opt out and go down the traditional route, they're still going to have to do the business side of things. They're still going to have to do the marketing. There's no getting away from it.

It is a chore and I don't particularly like it, either. But, nobody likes every aspect of their job. If you think back to any job you've had, yeah, there'll be bits that you love and there'll bits of it that you really didn't like.

You're not going to have to get up at 6:00 in the morning, get on the train in a freezing cold, February morning. You're not going to have to come home in the rush hour hordes. There are massive benefits to it, but yes, there are things you're not going to want to do.

There are things in this business that I don't like doing, but you do them because it's part of the job, and it's a crucial part of it that means you can then carry on doing the things you enjoy.

I guess this is probably more the professional mindset than it is the business mindset. That's why I put them in that order. Professional, visionary, business, because you have to be able to have that professional outlook in order to then tackle the business side of things.

You have to treat it as any other job. There are going to be things you don't like. It's the way it is. There's no getting away from it. If you, as I say, if you go to the traditional side of things, you're still going to have to do those things. So if you want to be a writer, that's part of it.

James Blatch: Mark talks about on the business side of things, treating it as a business and not necessarily your, but almost to put out of your mind that these are your books. There is a change in mindset at that point, in the afternoon, if you want to call it that, if you do your business in the afternoon, so to speak.

Adam Croft: Yeah.

James Blatch: That if you're constantly thinking this is your baby, you're not giving yourself the right distance to carry out the brutal marketing stuff.

Which, perhaps, this is why writers struggle to condense their book to a single sentence or paragraph. They think it's doing a disservice to their baby.

Adam Croft: That's why I always advocate, and I mention it in the book as well, setting up as a company and incorporating because that has a number of benefits.

There're going to be tax advantages, probably, in your country. That's not for me to advise on. I'm very much not a tax person in terms of understanding it. But there are a number of other advantages.

If you're running the company, then A, you are the boss and you have a vested interest in making sure that it profits and it does well. And you can also switch roles because in most countries, I know here in the UK if you have a limited company, you are the director of that company. You are an employee of it. You are a separate legal entity.

So I work for Adam Croft, legally speaking. And if get my head around that, then as you say, you can kind of separate the books. It's not just you. You are working for that brand and doing the marketing, doing the business.

James Blatch: You've talked about separating out mindsets into three. You've also said that you don't tell people what to think because that is not the point of this book.

What are people going to get out of this book, and why should they read it?

Adam Croft: It's more about guiding people to change the way they think, rather than saying you have to approach it this way. it's, I guess, psychologically speaking if you tell somebody to do something, they quite often won't do it.

But if somebody feels like it is their idea that's come from their way of thinking and the foundations that they've built, they're far more likely to do it. You can persuade people to do things a certain way.

That's not to say this is some kind of psychological mind game experiment, but it is about laying those foundations and explaining the reasoning behind the principles. And why the most successful authors approach things in this way.

I've got quotes and passages in the book from Mark Dawson, from Bryan Cohen, from Brian Meeks, David Gaughran. All sorts of people who have contributed stuff, sort of in context, to explain if they're an expert in a particular part of the independent publishing industry, to explain why that concept is so important.

James Blatch: We did a podcast interview with Chris Ducker earlier this year and he's a big advocate of new entrepreneurs working on their digital space from home, usually. Building their own brands and so on.

Now, he's published his book this year and he and I sort of stumbled across the fact that probably authors are the single biggest group of new entrepreneurs. Because there's lots of people doing various things. Telling you how to change your life, or how to mindset to entrepreneurs, all the rest of it.

But authors, as a group, is huge and a growing army of people. So I think this is important work that you're doing. Without being over grandstanding it, it's important work at this stage of the development of a new world of things that people get it right from the beginning of how this is going to look and feel.

It's not necessarily intuitive when you start working from home doing your own business. It doesn't necessarily come naturally.

Adam Croft: No, and this is not necessarily stuff for beginners, either. This is stuff that I realized five years into my publishing career. So it's not something that I had to have at the start.

If I had it at the start it would have helped me a lot, and it would have sped things up quite nicely. It's quite interesting knowing that we're the, one of the fastest growing parts of it. I suppose that goes down to the fact that there are so many benefits to it.

Yes, there is a lot of hard work. There are going to be things you don't have to do. But, you don't have to set up business premises. You don't have to create physical products yourself. I mean, obviously a book is a product that anybody can create. Really, anybody can write stories. Anybody has a story inside them. And even non-fiction, everyone's got a subject that they're passionate about, or they know a lot about that they can share with the world.

It makes sense that becoming an author is something that people want to do and is a very accessible thing for people. Even small things.

It's the only industry I've ever worked in where I've found everybody is so helpful in supportive. There's no competition. I mean, yeah, we all want the number one spot, and we all want to overtake everyone else in the charts. But there's no kind of sniping from that point of view. My direct competitors are willing to help me as much as anyone else.

James Blatch: You say that, interestingly, we have had a little bit this year, haven't we, with the trademarking of individual words. And that became quite nasty and still is in places. But I do wonder if that's part of the industry growing and maturing a little bit. We can't pretend it's going to be a nursery group holding hands forever.

Adam Croft: No.

James Blatch: It is still a business and some people are going to act in a way that you think is unethical.

But, that happens in every other business, I don't see why it's not going to happen in this business in the long-term as well.

Adam Croft: Of course. There are always going to be people who try to do things away from convention and things that people aren't keen on.

I think with the Cocky Gate thing that you're referring to there, that's I think the reason there was a lot of backlash towards Faleena on that is that a lot of people thought, "Well, this isn't the way we want the industry going." People were looking at the longterm implications of that.

It's not to say that that would happen. It's not to say that that was her intention. But they were looking long term and I agree with them, that in the long term that's not going to help anybody if we can't use certain words or titles or things start going down that route.

This is a free and open industry and it works that way. There needs to be restrictions because there are people that take the whatever. I won't use a rude word on this podcast. But, and people like David Gaughran are there calling that out with KU scammers and book stuffers and what have you.

Those things will happen. Where there is money to be made, there will be people who try doing it by unethical means and trying to make a fast buck. That will always happen in any industry. And as it grows and as it matures we iron those things out.

And I think that's kind of what was happening there. People were seeing that things might be going down a route they didn't want them to. And those people were looking at the longterm. They very much had that visionary mindset and they were looking a few years into the future and

thinking, "Hang on, if this carries on this way, it's not going to be fun for all of us."

It is an industry that looks out for itself and looks out for everyone else and when you do, you get that instance where somebody seems to be very much doing something for themselves at the expense of the community and at the expense of everybody else. It doesn't tend to go down to, "Well, in this industry ..."

James Blatch: Yeah, but it's an example of how it is an industry that is maturing and growing. We're not going to be insulated from some of the trials and tribulations of being in business forever.

Adam Croft: No.

James Blatch: The bigger it gets, the more this is going to happen.

Adam Croft: No, but we're a tough bunch, us authors and we stick together. And because the community is like that, those things tend to get stamped on much quicker than they would elsewhere.

There is of course the fact that it's virtually an entirely online industry does have the problems that the internet in general has that people are behind keyboards, they're behind screens. They perhaps react in ways and do things that they wouldn't do if they were meeting people face to face.

But that's part of the whole way the world's going to go now. And as a society we've got to try and find a way of dealing with that and realizing that there are people behind these things. But that's a much deeper political conversation for another time.

James Blatch: Now the other thing that I see come up occasionally in emails we receive here and you probably get them as well, is that some people

are reluctant to spend any money at the beginning of their careers. I mean, any money.

And, if they do talk about spending money, it's very, very limited. I think there's a mindset thing there as well. That there's this idea that this can be all done for zero start-up costs. That you can write a book and upload it to Amazon, which of course you can, at zero cost.

But with some planning and investment you set yourself up to be a business that's going to turn over money in the future.

Is it naïve, or the wrong mindset to think that this is not a traditional business in the sense that it needs a bit of investment at the beginning?

Adam Croft: Yes, it does. And any other business you would. I mean, you are running a business. If you are self publishing a book, you are running a business. There's no getting away from it.

You can just upload a book and leave it there, and nobody will buy it. That's the fact of the matter. Nobody's gonna find it. Even if you do a little bit on Twitter, and you're handing out leaflets in your town, or whatever, that counts as marketing. You're still doing it, but it's not likely to work as well.

You do need to accept that that is the case, and there's no other industry where you would be able to get away with not marketing, and not advertising.

If you wanted to set up a shoe shop, you would have to pay the rent on the shop. You would have to get a sign writer. And you couldn't just go out there with a bucket of paint and a paint brush, and paint your own sign on the front of your shop. It wouldn't look great.

You would have to advertise. You would have to do things in order to get customers through the door, and to push your brand.

This industry is much, much easier than any other, in terms of running a business. You don't have to leave your front room. You can get your laptop out, and you can go on AMS, and you can spend five minutes setting up for that, and within an hour or two, those ads in your books will be put in front of tens of thousands of people. There's no other industry in which you can do that. Especially so cheaply and so easily.

It's difficult, and yes there are things that you might not want to, but it's a hell of a lot easier than the other side. The grass is not greener on the other side. We have it very, very good. And, as you always say at the beginning of your podcast, or as the lady announcer does, there's never been a better time to be a writer.

You've got to bite the bullet and get on that train now, because as much as we're trying to shape the industry into the way we want it, and the way it is now, is pretty good, to be honest. If it stayed like this for the next few decades, I think we'd all be very happy.

But, at some point, it's going to change. And things are going to evolve. You want to be getting on there now, really.

James Blatch: It's a low start-up, can be a low start-up, but it's still quite an investment. It requires editing, and cover design, and advertising, and selling. There's no shortcut. There's not one that we teach, there's not one that you teach, which is a way of doing all of that for free.

Adam Croft: There are short cuts, like I said, when you want to open a shoe shop, you can break into a premises and squat there, and you can paint your own sign on the front.

James Blatch: Occupy shoes.

Adam Croft: And you can paint your own sign on the front, and you can do advertising, but how well do you think that would actually work? It's the same in this industry, yes. There are going to be costs.

But they're not costs. This is something else I go into in the book. **Costs and expenses are very different things.** They're investments that you make that are going to benefit the future of your career.

It feeds into visionary mindset as well, in that you have to be able to have the vision to look forward and adapt your business, and your career in preparation for what's coming. It's about looking at things in the long term, and being willing to take a short term hit. Be it financial, or effort-based, in return for greater long term rewards.

James Blatch: You realize that shoe shop you described is a very trendy Shoreditch shoe shop with a broken window out front.

Adam Croft: That's why I was saying it. As I was saying it, I was thinking, you know what? It's so out there, it might just work.

James Blatch: Greenwich Village, or Shoreditch or something.

Adam Croft: Don't try it anyway, don't try it.

James Blatch: Who have you aimed the book at?

Adam Croft: I know this is a very unwise thing to do, especially with non-fiction. But I tried to aim it at writers of all types, really.

People are interested in self-publishing. It's probably not for people who haven't written a book at all, or are thinking about it. If you've got a book or two out there, it's ideal.

The feedback I've had from people is if they are, perhaps, further down the line, they find that the first part of the book, the first half can come across as a bit basic. There's still a lot of good refreshers in there, but as you get towards the end, they start to pick up new things and stuff that they can take away and do things with.

And, likewise, for people who are quite new to it, the first half is great grounding. A great way for them to get their foot in the door, if you like, and to change their way of thinking from the start.

But, the second half tends to get into things like data, and the marketing, and that gets a little bit, you might want to be further down the line, before you get to that bit.

It's not too basic, it's not too advanced. I've tried to bridge the gap there, and mindset is something that applies to everybody. This is why I didn't go into marketing tips, and specifics, and things like that. Because, they will apply at certain stages of the career.

Mindset is something that underpins everything, that's something that everybody can use at any stage in their career.

James Blatch: You better tell us where people can find it.

Adam Croft: Pretty much everywhere. One of the parts of mindset that I'm particularly passionate about is going wide and having books available everywhere, and not leaving any money on the table.

So, it's available on Amazon Kindle, it's available in paperback, hopefully in audio as well, by the time this goes out, fingers crossed. It's a Kobo, Nook, Google Play, Apple iBooks, just about everywhere.

James Blatch: Title?

Adam Croft: *The Indie Author Mindset*.

James Blatch: *Indie Author Mindset* by Adam Croft. You used Adam Croft, that name, not A.C. Croft or something to differentiate fiction-

Adam Croft: Adam Croft is on the cover. In terms of the author names on Amazon, it's down as Adam L. Croft. But it'll all work. That was because I didn't want it to appear on my usual Author Central profile and dilute my also boughts and marketing effects towards my fiction.

James Blatch: Mark does the same thing, he's Mark J. Dawson for the SPF non-fiction books.

Adam Croft: It's a wise move.

James Blatch: Yes, people who want to read about John Milton strangling somebody, whatever Milton's doing now, may not necessarily want to read about author mindset.

Adam, we appreciate the time that you've spend here. I know you've always been right from the begining, quite enthusiastic about the writing community and wanting people to succeed.

You were very open, right from the begining with your own experience in helping others. I think this is a natural step for you. I wish you good luck with it.

Adam Croft: Thank you very much. Thank you.

James Blatch: I guess you're due on in about four months about something else.

Adam Croft: Yeah, I was gonna say, about Christmastime, I'll be back. I'll find a reason to get my face and my voice out there, don't you worry.

James Blatch: Thanks, Adam.

Adam Croft: Thank you.

James Blatch: The business switch, something which Adam talked about, now something you've talked a lot about, and something you do find, we do find some resistance to that because, understandably, not everyone who's drawn to a life of writing, is drawn to a life of spreadsheets, and dashboards, and panels.

But, you do need to make that mental switch don't you?

Mark Dawson: It doesn't have to be those things. It means just being able to switch off from being a creative artist and switch on to being a business person. So, that would be a part of it.

But also being professional with regards to covers and accepting criticism and getting the right blurbs done.

Advertising, for example, we obviously know quite a lot about advertising, and that's something I knew was valuable three or four years ago. I taught myself how to do that.

Not everyone is cut out that way. Which is fine, if those kinds of people, there are other ways to get published. You could look for a traditional deal and hope that they do it for you, or you could find a small press. Someone like Jasper Joffe would be a good place to look, if you're not into that.

But, then, most authors, I would say the majority, their first port of call should be to learn how to do it themselves. Get themselves in that mindset where they don't see their books as these fragile pieces of art, but they see them as ASINs, Amazon Standard Identification Numbers, those units that you need to sell.

Then, at the end of every day, even the ways that you should have upheld is by getting your book reports out by the end of the day and seeing how many units you've sold, and how much you made that day.

James Blatch: I think one of the fascinating benefits of that is it should feed back to your writing. If you do divorce yourself from it emotionally, you're using these books as products, there'll be moments during that process when you think, "Well, that book's done well, and that book's not done so well. So, the next time I write..."

This is exactly what Adam Croft did, of course, he thought, "This is the advertising that seems to work well, so I'm going to gear a book entirely around what seems to have a clean, snappy hook." So, he wrote a book, called *Her Last Tomorrow*.

That feeding back is only going to happen if you properly divorce yourself from it, and think of yourself, as you say, kind of like a marketer selling product.

Mark Dawson: Someone posted about a podcast he did on cable, yesterday or today, or something like that. Basically explained how he'd reverse-engineered the process to start with a hook.

I don't do that, that's way away from the way that I do things. But, some of the responses, some people understood it, and there were a couple that this is just too unemotional. Too analytical.

Which, that's fine, they're entitled to their opinion, but Adam's goal is, without putting words in his mouth, Adam's goal is not to win the Booker prize. It's not to write a searingly honest novel that's going to make people swoon with his perfect sentences.

He's very commercial, he wants to make money. That's exactly what he's done. Think about it in that very analytical, very, breaking it down to what he would be advertising, and then writing a book to fit the hook. I think that was a very clever move by him, and he's done extremely well over the last couple of years.

James Blatch: *The Indie Author Mindset: How Changing Your Way of Thinking Can Transform Your Writing Career* is available in all good online retailers. £4.99 in the UK on Amazon. £8.99 for the paperback. And I'm sure equivalent prices are in the U.S.

Mark Dawson: Who wrote the forward?

James Blatch: Yes, of course, is there a look inside here? Let's have a look and see if we can see who wrote the forward.

Mark Dawson: It's probably on pre-order.

James Blatch: Look, Mark Dawson, sold through July 2018.

Mark Dawson: That's me.

James Blatch: And you spelled forward correctly, that's good. So, yes, you've contributed to the book, and Adam has lent on a lot of the big names in the Indie Industry, and the publishing industry, to contribute to this book, so it's well worth looking at.

I think we can all learn something about getting into a writing form of mind, and produce stuff. As Adam is frequently heard saying, it's all about, "bum on seat, hands on keyboard."

Although I can't stand there, so I don't know where that leaves me.

Mark Dawson: And I've got a microphone. You could even dictate.

James Blatch: How are you getting on with your dictation by the way?

Mark Dawson: I like it. It's just too many for emails at the moment. It's quite helpful just to blast through, I get hundreds of emails. I certainly get lots. It's quite useful for blasting through those.

I am thinking about the book I'm going to be writing after this one, and the next one. I may try and dictate some of that, just to see how it goes.

But, I'm actually quite impressed with the accuracy is excellent. 99% accurate, even on a Mac.

What I was worried about was the actual physical process of writing would be something that I would not be able to divorce from my process, and that I'd find it too awkward, and just too different mentally to have to think about dictating, and I haven't found that.

You can, sounds a bit pretentious, but step back and just think about the flow state that you can get into something. I think I will be able to do that while I'm dictating as well. I did a couple of tests just for non-fiction, but I'm thinking of doing, next year probably ... I was doing 3,000 words and hour with dictation. Normally, I do 3,000 words a day. Think about two hours, I could do six hours of words. 7,000 words. Obviously it's making me significantly more productive.

James Blatch: Yes.

Mark Dawson: So, we'll see. Early days, but I'm quite encouraged so far.

James Blatch: We do have an episode devoted to Dragon Dictation, if you look in our archive. It's selfpublishingformula.com.

One final thing to mention, we haven't mentioned, is the fact that you've had a very high profile television appearance in the U.K. recently on BBC Breakfast.

Mark Dawson: I did. It was great. I loved it. It was weird, actually. That's why this is a mindset thing, as well, just a different way of looking at it.

But, when we started doing this, I think I should probably say it's probably not too bad, but I used to hate being on screen. I used to hate the sound of my voice. When I was younger, I used to hate making telephone calls. I used to be terrified of it.

Just through practice, and doing a podcast, where I had my face on screen every week, for how many years? Two years we've been doing this now. I've just become much more confident. The prospect of going on national television, they get 1.7 million viewers on Breakfast. So, actually, it was fine. I really enjoyed it.

James Blatch: You looked very relaxed. You did.

Mark Dawson: I was.

James Blatch: You looked a little bit more nervous than you normally do. I wouldn't say you looked nervous, but I could tell, compared to how you are now, for instance, that was a little bit of adrenaline going around your body.

Mark Dawson: Yes. It was interesting too, talking about the book that I'm writing. An espionage thriller whilst living in Salisbury with all the nonsense that has been going on in Salisbury.

Obviously, someone has died by that. So, what I was very worried about was that people didn't think I was exploiting their tragedy, or being flippant, which it really isn't.

I knew the questions that might come up, but I was well prepared. My publicist did a really good job beforehand telling me what to expect, what the questions might be. My chat with the BBC researcher for half an hour beforehand.

So, they set up where they're going to be coming from. Breakfast television is not ambush TV normally. They're pretty relaxed and I loved it. I've been asked to do regional TV as well, which I'll probably do next month. I really liked it. I'd be very happy to do more TV.

James Blatch: She wanted to push the line about everyone being terrified in Salisbury, and of course you were dampening that fire, by partially saying, "People are not terrified in Salisbury."

Mark Dawson: I did. That was not the sensible question on her part. I knew that it might come. At least she asked it, because that was one of the reasons I wanted to do TV, that I could say that. And as I drove away in the taxi back to the airport, for a whole day at the airport, as it turned out, lucky me.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: I just took my phone, and on Twitter, and I'd had re-tweets from Salisbury City Council, and the local business associations, and traders who I know-

James Blatch: And Vladimir Putin.

Mark Dawson: Vladimir Putin, all those kinds of people, just saying thanks for that message. Hopefully, in a small way, it's helped a little bit. But, it was one of the reasons I wanted to do it.

James Blatch: Did it help your book sales?

Mark Dawson: No, not massively. Interestingly enough, there's a pre-order at the moment. So, I did keep an eye on it. I think I maybe sold 50 that day, which is small beer. I could do that with a Facebook ad, no problem. So, I didn't see floods.

I think mostly because it was a pre-order. We were also focusing on the, not on the book, but on being in Salisbury and writing a book. Mostly about the Novichok and the Skripals and all that. It wasn't really about me pitching, which I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: In circumstances anyway. A couple of comments in the Facebook groups, yes, we have community about, we have "Mark didn't pitch too hard." There was a reason for that. Someone is dead, and it would have felt really icky for me to go on and say-

James Blatch: You also didn't mention the fact that you're independently published.

Mark Dawson: No, if they had asked me I would have said. The graphic that came up was Mark Dawson, author. I think that's a good message. I've said for a long time, I do not see any distinction between how I choose to publish my books and how James Patterson chooses to publish his books. I'm completely agnostic on the means of delivery.

For me, it's all about story, and how I choose to get my books into the hands of readers. Whether it's dead trees, or electrons, doesn't make any difference to me.

I think they thought I was traditionally published. That was the impression I got from some of the questions they asked. That's fine. I'm not going to jump up and say, "Oh, by the way, I'm not traditionally published."

James Blatch: You don't want to shoot your way in.

Mark Dawson: I don't care about that. If they'd asked, if they said, "You publish yourself, tell us about that." They wouldn't have been able to shut me up.

One of the things my publicist said, one of the lines that we've been pushing in, there's a Telegraph interview with me, and in the telegraph, one of the cool quotes was, "The best selling author you've never heard of."

All I know is not to focus on the fact that people haven't heard of me, just it's the best selling author. I think I can see some common sense in that approach.

James Blatch: Yeah. Good. Well, one more time, you looked very relaxed. You came across very well on the interview. You looked like a thriller author. I guess that's because that's what you are.

I quite like the name Dead Trees and Electrons, because we're looking for a rebranding name for the podcast, so let's go with that. Dead Trees and Electrons Podcast.

Mark Dawson: Let's not.

James Blatch: If you want to watch Mark in action, you can go to our YouTube channel, which is [youtube.com/SelfPublishingFormula](https://www.youtube.com/SelfPublishingFormula) and we've posted the BBC interview there so you can watch it. See Mark in all his glory.

We have a great episode next week. It's all about the Indie Author Toolkit. The essential tools that you need in your bag if you're going to be a successful Indie author. So, don't miss that one.

In the meantime, have a wonderful week writing your books, and a wonderful week selling your books. We'll speak to you next week, bye-bye.

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