

## **EPISODE 137: WHY YOU NEED TO BE PUBLISHING AUDIOBOOKS – WITH TINA DIETZ**

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, here in your house of chat, about everything from the writing world that you need to know: stuff about writing, reading, publishing, covers, making money from your books.

Basically this is what this is about; it's about people who want to earn an income from their writing. And there's no reason not to listen to it if you simply want to write as a hobby, but a lot of our talk and discussion is about turning your hobby into something that pays.

Mark, I guess you are an example of somebody who as a little boy, thought about writing and was always there. And this indie revolution has changed your life. Let's just remind ourselves of that.

Mark Dawson: It certainly has, yeah. I started writing in my early teens. I was probably younger than that, really. I've always wanted to be a writer. And had a couple of false starts, as people probably know, and only in the last four, five years, has it become something that I've been able to do as a full-time job. So yes, we love it.

James Blatch: And you've done it well, because this year could be a million dollar revenue year for you in selling your books.

Mark Dawson: Looks like it at the moment, although lately it has been a little slower than I'd like. As I've been posting to Facebook it's actually dropped down to about ... Basically, I need to make \$2,000 a day in order to hit a million, and normally I'm way above that. Normally nearer \$3,000.

But the last three or four days, it's been quite low actually. And a couple of the days have been the lowest I've had this year. So not quite under \$2,000, but getting close to that.

I'm not sure why: could be any number of reasons. But the good news is, I've got a new book coming out at the end of the month, and I'll have 5,000 pre-orders on that by probably this week. And that's at \$4.99, so that's ... on its own is between \$15,000 and \$20,000. So that'll be a quite nice bump for the end of this month and the start of next month. I'm still pretty confident. But we'll see.

James Blatch: Well if you don't make a million dollars this year...

Mark Dawson: It's your fault.

James Blatch: Well, our first podcast episode of 2019 can be Why I Failed As An Author.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, exactly. I'm fairly confident, but we'll see. I'll keep everyone posted.

James Blatch: That's good. And successes are to be shared. It doesn't sound very British that does it? Sharing.

So we normally don't, but we do on this podcast, and we've had lots of stories of people not necessarily making a million dollars a year, but people suddenly making a couple of thousand or a thousand dollars a month, which can be life changing. That sort of extra pays their mortgage

suddenly, and brings them a step closer to living that dream of writing full-time.

And today, we can tell you that an alumni of the 101 course, Imogen Clark, who lives in the north of England-

Mark Dawson: Alumnus.

James Blatch: Alumnus. Oh, I think I've put "alumni" on Twitter. I'll get picked up on that then. Alumni is plural, is it? You know your Latin. Okay.

An alumnus of 101, Imogen Clark is number one in the UK-wide Kindle store today with her book, which is absolutely fantastic. We're thrilled for Imogen, and she did the 101 course, gave her book the visibility ... I think it had been there for some time, but gave the book all the visibility and the platform that you talk about, that you need to have in place to be successful, and pretty quickly, her sales went up and she got a phone call from Amazon, because their algorithm ticked.

**They've offered a three-book deal, which is perfect for her. It's what she wanted to do, and she's now, well, number one best seller. How cool is that?**

Mark Dawson: She's done amazing. I remember I introduced her to the Amazon publishing team, after they'd emailed her at the Harrogate Crime Festival last year, so I was up there to ... I don't know, hang about, I suppose, and I saw a couple of the guys from A Pub, and I introduced Imogen to them.

She's signed on, and is doing amazingly, so number one in the UK at the moment, which fills us with pride. We're very pleased for her.

James Blatch: It does. You can follow Imogen at imogenclark on Twitter. Clark without an "e".

Okay, now we have a get together coming up, a chance for the millionaire Mark Dawson to buy you a beer. That's going to happen-

Mark Dawson: Yeah, right.

James Blatch: Well, maybe yeah. It means he's probably not going to buy beers now, because he's nervous about only making \$900,000 this year. We should say this is your gross revenue, right-

Mark Dawson: Yes.

James Blatch: ... before people think that you've got a million dollars in the bank as a result of this. Of course, lots of spending on Facebook ads and so on, but if you want to get into the detail of that, Mark posts a lot of this information, including those figures, into the Facebook group. So you can follow closely the business side of things.

But we are going to get together in Florida, in St. Pete Beach, which is close to St. Petersburg on the Gulf Coast there. Very lovely venue, the TradeWinds Grand Resort.

We're going to be in the Shark Tooth Tavern, which is just as cool as it sounds, on Wednesday the 26th of September. Wednesday the 26th of September in the Shark Tooth Tavern in St. Pete Beach, which is part of the TradeWinds Resort.

I think it's called Gulf Boulevard, the road, the strip that runs along there. And we will buy you a beer, and we may even give you an SPF pin, which is something to behold.

Mark Dawson: It is. Yeah, I have a bag full of them. They're very nice pins. Recommended.

James Blatch: Excellent, well we love when people come along and say hello to us. And I shall be there with my video camera as well, so probably be grabbing a few of you for chats one way and another.

This episode is about audio books. Actually it's partially about audio books, but also about non-fiction. So the audio books section of this interview applies equally to fiction and non-fiction. There's lots of stuff about choosing the correct voiceover artist, and where to place and how to do all this stuff, and some of the ins and outs of it. From a writer, a non-fiction writer, who's going great guns and has a good non-fiction business, so I took the opportunity to talk about NF stuff as well.

We have quite an NF audience, and often we get questions about whether the type of thing that Mark talks about applies to non-fiction. And I know Mark, your answer and Jo Penn's answer for instance, is "Look at us if you think that non-fiction isn't a relevant thing for fiction authors to think about." Even if it's a smaller side hustle, you've built quite a monster with SPF, and Jo Penn's non-fiction side of her business outweighs I think her fiction side.

I was looking at Garrett Robinson; we've had him on the podcast before. I visited Garrett up in Oregon in the past, and he writes fantasy books. And he's done very well thanks to your course, Mark, but he has also developed I think quite a good non-fiction following, because he's talking to other writers, which is the obvious route for good writers and good marketing writers to go down.

He's got a really good YouTube channel; he works really hard at that. And that's a type of thing that even if you think well, I haven't got a particular skill or expertise ... well, if you're successfully writing and selling books, actually you do have a skill and expertise. So non-fiction is an important part of the writing business, and some people may not have even thought of it.

Mark Dawson: It is. It's not for everyone. Not everyone wants to teach, and not everyone has the time to effectively set up another business, but there are plenty of authors who've done that now.

David Gaughran was probably the first I can think of, or Jo Penn. Those two have been doing it for a long time. Adam Croft has recently published a book on the indie author mindset, a non-fiction book for Adam. Chris Fox does that.

There are quite a lot of authors moving into that space, or just adding that to their fiction books. And you know, it does make sense. I'm all for mitigating risk, and the more income streams that you can have, the more you're insulating yourself.

If one thing goes tits up, so if my books suddenly stop working, then obviously we've got SPF, or if SBF stops working, then I could concentrate more on books.

There's lots of ways that you can insulate yourself from those kinds of vicissitudes ... there's another big word for the day ... of just general business.

It's not for everyone but I think it can be quite sensible in some circumstances.

James Blatch: Our guest is very authoritative on the subjects of both non-fiction and in particular, audio books and why you should be thinking seriously about audio books. Her name is Tina Dietz. Let's hear from Tina.

Tina, welcome to the SPF podcast. Thank you very much indeed for joining us.

Tina Dietz: Thanks for having me, James.

James Blatch: It's our pleasure. What we normally do, before we get into the meat of the subject ... and we're going to be talking non-fiction and audio books in particular today as we hear a little bit about our guest ...

### **Why don't you give us the low-down on who Tina Dietz is.**

Tina Dietz: It's been a long and twisty journey, but what I do now is I work with people who are subject matter experts, authors, leaders. My company, we work with them to get their message out all over the world. So more influence, bigger audiences.

I also personally work one-on-one with authors and leaders to help hone their voice and their message, so that they're making the impact that they want to impact.

And the majority of our company, what we do is a lot of audio publishing. We take audio books from start to finish, and do distribution. And we also do that with podcasting as well. So all aspects of getting your voice out to the world, is what we do.

I personally have a very mixed background as a therapist, as an entrepreneur ... Life-long entrepreneur: I grew up inside of my parents' business. And also as a business coach and a speaker.

I fell into the whole audio side of things because of my own love of quite honestly, being onstage. I was that drama kid in high school, and went on to do some work with voice acting. And that kind of led me down this path of audio as I was building other businesses. So it all kind of converged.

### **James Blatch: Your customers today, your clients: are they mainly from the digital entrepreneur space, or do you have very traditional clients as well, who want a piece of that action?**

Tina Dietz: No, it really ranges across the board.

I think the thing that holds all of my clientele together in terms of the umbrella, is that they're all experts in something. They're all deeply passionate, and deeply knowledgeable about what they do.

And they're looking for ways to reach people, even more from the sense of wanting to reach the right people and get the message out there, and leave a legacy.

They all have a purpose, they all have a mission to get out there. So that's more important to them many times than even the financial rewards of the book or what they're doing, although they get both.

James Blatch: You're not a fan of the kind of CEO who sits there with his spreadsheets and tries to deliver shareholder value.

**You're a fan of the person who runs a business because it's their passion, because there's a reason for them doing it.**

Tina Dietz: Yeah, I mean I actually have a close colleague who runs a company called STJ Solutions, and they do bioremediation. They're cleaning up the world's water supply, and it's something I'm super passionate about, they're super passionate about, and so as one of the co-founders, Robin Thompson, always says about business: "One, don't screw anyone over ever, and two, make sure you make a profit."

James Blatch: Okay.

Tina Dietz: Pretty basic, right?

James Blatch: Yeah.

Tina Dietz: Spreadsheets and making money and all of that, absolutely, because you can help more people. And you can do all that inside of something that is purpose-driven as well.

I think you can have it all. You don't have to be poor in order to make a difference in the world or to be spiritual or to be holy or any of those kind of things.

James Blatch: I know you're big on creativity, and you talk about creativity being an important part of business. And you're not just talking about the creative industries, which many of the people listening to this podcast will be as writers, in the creative industry.

### **You're talking about creativity in every business.**

Tina Dietz: Yes, creativity as a human feature. It's something that we're all imbued with, in one way or another. You don't have to consider yourself to be an artist to be creative.

We all have a creative drive. We all want to leave something in this world after us, whether that's our kids or our business, or a message or a book, or a series of books, or whatever the case may be.

I think that giving ourselves permission to access that creativity, it gives us access to moving through problems a lot faster. Creativity requires curiosity, and curiosity is the antidote to shame. And it's only shame that keeps us, or fear of being judged, which is really the same thing ... that keeps us from getting our message out into the world, or keeps us from creating that book or getting that message out there, or kind of the whole make your dreams come true thing that we grew up with as kids, that we tend to squash a little bit as adults.

Creativity and curiosity are the access points to bringing all that back and really being productive.

James Blatch: I think that does touch on very much the area that our audience are in, and I'm in, in writing a book. There is definitely some of that.

Let's talk a little bit about audio books. Funnily enough, even with our audience and our SPF community, for very many people, they're a bit of a "I'll get round to it when I've got time".

Tina Dietz: Yes.

James Blatch: But other people rave about audio books. In fact, someone on this podcast said not that long ago, it should be a priority right at the beginning.

### **And I think you're probably going to be in that camp, right?**

Tina Dietz: I think many times it is a priority. And that's just simply because of the priority ... Well, not even looking at the priority, but the popularity of audio books.

They're the one area of publishing that has been on double digit, every year, year after year, sales increase for the last five or six years. I mean, it's going to break 3.5 billion dollars in sales this year.

James Blatch: Wow.

So just talk to us about your personal audiobooks. And then I know you help other people, right? You have a kind of service. You're a non-fiction business person we would call it in the trade, in the author trade, in that you have a service. Your books are about a practical thing.

### **Do you use audio books yourself?**

Tina Dietz: In terms of being a consumer, yes. I do listen to audio books and podcasts frequently. It's really a matter of convenience more than anything. Besides the fact that I enjoy them, it's like having a conversation or in the case of audio books, storytelling.

Storytelling is kind of our oldest form. Oral history, passing stories around the fire, just we're wired for stories, and we're wired for storytelling. And audio books are a part of that. It's not a new thing.

James Blatch: No. Sorry, I suppose what I meant was:

**Do you have your own authored audio books as well as the audio books you help your clients produce?**

Tina Dietz: I spend so much time working with my authors that my own books keep getting put on the back burner, and I know a lot of authors out there can relate to that.

James Blatch: Okay. So all right, so let's talk about the service that you provide and what you do from beginning to end on an audio book.

**What are the key things that people should be getting right with audio books?**

Tina Dietz: The biggest question that I get about audio books is, "Should I narrate the book myself or should I work with a professional narrator?" And particularly in the world of non-fiction, this comes up every single time.

Very rarely do I ever hear a fiction author, 'cause I still speak to groups of fiction authors, and I love working with fiction authors, but they tend to be ... there are differences in what most people are thinking about the purpose of their audio book.

So whereas non-fiction authors are looking to get out their message, and yes, they want to sell books, yes they want to sell a lot of books, but they also tend to be looking at their book as part of building their professional platform, building their credibility, and building visibility for the other conduits that they have for income.

Whereas fiction authors primarily are looking to sell books, period, full stop. And so it's a bit of a different animal in terms of the marketing between the two worlds.

But the process is very, very much the same. Except as a fiction author, I would say, you never, ever want to narrate your own book.

Whereas as a nonfiction author, I would say, about 75% of the time you don't want to narrate your own book.

James Blatch: Right.

Tina Dietz: There's a few exceptions to that rule, even though a lot of nonfiction authors will say, "Well, this is my story, I have to narrate it."

I would come back and say, "Well, yes, you can do that, and is it actually going to make a difference in building your platform? Is it going to make a difference in the number of books you sell?"

Because we find that nine times out of 10, it doesn't. And in the case of a poorly narrated audio book, it can actually hurt the author.

**James Blatch: What are the exceptions then? People who happen to have a natural talent for it, or if you happen to be Richard Branson, and people are expecting to hear your voice.**

Tina Dietz: There's a certain number of followers that if you have, or you've got a certain notoriety or you have a publisher that is willing to invest in the

process for you and get you a director and get you a studio and get you coaching, and all those other things you need to really produce a quality audio book, absolutely. You're going to want to do that.

But we tend to find that unless you have a large audience, and when I say a large audience, I mean half a million or more, of people who are used to hearing your voice, then we don't see any difference in the sales numbers.

And in a case of people who have large followings, but let's say that they're bloggers or writers, and people aren't used to hearing their voices, we still don't see a difference on the back end of a difference in the sales numbers.

Since it is such a learning curve, even for professional speakers, people who have been on stages for decades, it is a different skill set when you get behind the microphone and do an audio book. So it really depends on if they want to have that skill set, and invest the extra amount of time and energy and money that it takes to narrate a book yourself versus work with a professional narrator.

James Blatch: It's a bit like acting a thing, narrating a book. So it's one question to ask yourself, is how good an actor are you?

**How much acting have you done? If the answer to that is not very good and none, then definitely get a professional, I would say.**

Tina Dietz: Exactly, exactly. Very much like that.

James Blatch: Okay, so the process then. Let's assume that we've made a good decision, and we're going to get somebody in to narrate our book. And I guess there's a significant difference between fiction and nonfiction here.

**What process should you go through in choosing the right voice for your book? This is important, to get that voice right.**

Tina Dietz: It's the most important thing. And we've developed a process, because I've been on the voice acting side as well as the business side of things. We act as an intermediary so that then the voice actors get what they need and want, and our authors get what they want as well.

When you're looking for a good narrator or a great narrator, there's a couple of things that come into play. One is that narrators can work in two different ways one is through what's kind a royalty share, which is where there's no upfront cost to the author, and then you split the proceeds for the next seven years, fifty fifty.

And the other way is through something called per finished hour. And every finished hour of audio, and you know, an hour of an audio book takes about five to six hours for a professional to produce. It's not a short amount of time.

James Blatch: That includes all the editing that goes afterwards.

Tina Dietz: All the editing, all the mastering, the corrections, all of that. So per finished hour is the other way that narrators will work. That can range anywhere from 50 dollars per finished hour, which I don't recommend that you offer, to 600 dollars per finished hour and up.

James Blatch: Okay.

Tina Dietz: It really depends on where, the type of narrator you want. If you want someone who is in the actor's union, who's in SAG-AFTRA, lot of them are out in LA and do this all the time, and this is what they do. If you want somebody who can really do the robust voices that you want, say in a fiction book, then you're talking about offering about 225 dollars and up per finished hour.

James Blatch: Okay.

Tina Dietz: If you don't want somebody who's in the union, you can offer less. Generally we recommend anywhere in the 150 to 200 dollars per finished hour range.

**James Blatch: And how many words go into a finished hour? So people can try and work out how much it would cost to get their book done.**

Tina Dietz: The rule of thumb is about 10,000 words per finished hour.

James Blatch: So a 100,000 word book would be 10 hours.

Tina Dietz: Absolutely.

James Blatch: So that's a reasonable investment. And then funnily enough, you said five hours per one hour finished, and I come from a TV world before this, where even in news, which is slap dash, thrown together, we were an hour for a finished minute.

Tina Dietz: Exactly.

James Blatch: And in costume drama, one of my colleagues who worked over in costume drama told me that they were 10 hours per minute of work effort that goes in. So five hours per hour is pretty good. In terms of production.

Tina Dietz: It is pretty good for production.

James Blatch: And if you don't know anything about this world, it's very easy to underestimate that, and wonder what on earth's all that time going into. But production, well you can probably have a look around both our rooms, there's a lot of equipment, a lot of time goes into recording this

interview's just the beginning of getting this podcast out, right, as you well know.

Tina Dietz: Oh, definitely.

James Blatch: So you choose your actor. You have these various options in price terms, I guess. And in terms of tone, if you're a fiction, if you're a non-fiction author.

Talk about non-fiction for a second. I'm guessing that the gender is going to be your gender. It would probably not make sense if your name's Dave to have a female voice, although wouldn't rule it out, but it would probably not make sense. Fiction, I don't know what the answer is.

### **Is it going to be a kind of gender stereotypical set of romance genres go with a female voice, and the thriller genres go with a male voice?**

Tina Dietz: That's actually been a big change in the audio book industry in the last 10 years. It used to be when it was all just traditional publishers doing the publishing that no matter what the character, main character was in the book, the gender of the narrator always went with the author's gender, which always blew my mind. It was really, really strange.

In the last 10 years, with the rise of self-publishing, and the rise of I think, more common sense, we're seeing a lot more gender matching with the main character's gender. And because it makes more sense with fiction if you've got a female lead, that you're going to have primarily a female narrator.

A lot of people ask me about, well, if I have a female narrator, how are they going to do the male voices? That's why it's voice acting. And people have to do the acting.

You can do more than one narrator, you can do what is called full cast production, but that gets fairly complicated. And also gets fairly expensive. So you will rarely see full cast production in anything but major New York Times best selling books.

James Blatch: That's getting into radio play territory, right? Moving away from a voiced book.

Tina Dietz: Yes. Radio drama.

James Blatch: I can imagine that's a whole different thing.

That makes sense to me. I mean JK Rowling is a woman, but probably most of the voices in that book are male. There's a couple of distinctive female voices in there, but it would not necessarily make sense automatically go with a female voice just 'cause she's called Joanna.

But anyways, so I'm pleased we've moved on a little bit from that. I don't know what voice there is. And so then in terms of the actual tone of the voice, again this is going to be ... I mean, how do you ... I put voiceover artists for our professional work, our video work. In fact we're getting a new voice for the podcast intro at the moment.

We use some of these online sites, and you get 25 people record a sentence or two that you've written, and you can listen to all the voices and make a choice. I quite like that. That process.

### **Is that audition process available to people choosing for their book?**

Tina Dietz: If you're in the U.S., Canada, Ireland, or the UK, you can use the self-publishing portal for Amazon, Audible, and iTunes that's called ACX. That stands for audiobookcreationexchange.com.

You can audition narrators through that platform. It'll ask you all kinds of questions, there's a learning curve certainly to go through. And you can audition all kinds of narrators from all over the world.

We actually use ACX in conjunction with our other resources to send out auditions for up to maybe seven to 10,000 narrators per book, and we get back anywhere from 80 to 150 auditions per book. That then we have to go through.

Choosing your audition is actually an important part, whether it's fiction or non-fiction. You don't want it to be too long. You want to really choose one to two strong paragraphs. And you also want to let your narrators know in the audition process what types of characters they're going to need to narrate.

Because if you've got a strong female lead character who is ... I'll pick a popular thing right now, who is an assassin. And you know, is kind of hard boiled, she lives in some sort of supernatural world, but then you've got a whole other cast of supporting characters that are very different from that main narrative voice, you're going to need to let in the audition process, the narrator's know that, so that they can actually self-select.

You'll get a way better selection of more qualified narrators if you give them more information about your characters overall up front. Because you can't ask a whole bunch of voice actors to give you five pages of audition to get every single one of your characters played out in an audition. You won't get auditions if you do that. It's actually kind of offensive to voice actors if you do that.

James Blatch: Spending a lot of time.

Tina Dietz: They spend so much time on just the audition that makes them think that you're going to be a difficult author to work with.

So it's really best to allow the narrators to come forward and show you what they can do for you, and allow them to make suggestions on different characters. If an author is more open to that, it's really helpful.

And on the non-fiction side, it's not all that different. We're looking for what we say the spirit of the author in our narrators. A good energetic match. Are they believable?

If you're talking about marketing, do you believe that that narrator knows what they're talking about when it comes to marketing. Or if they're talking about money in abundance, same kind of thing.

Or if it's a memoir of some kind. Can you believe that they actually experienced what was happening for the author at that time? So that's what we're listening for. And there's particular ways of listening for that. The audition process is crucial.

James Blatch: I can imagine being quite tricky. Just think about the fiction side first. We'll talk about non-fiction.

One of the things that authors say to me, in fact an Irish author said to me, this last week in London, we were chatting, is that she wants her books are out there and she started gathering traction. She was really surprised by who her audience was.

She had an idea who were audience was going to be, and she thought predominantly female, and it came out about a 50/50 split, and the age was a bit younger than she thought.

If you've got this idea of your book, and you're listening for that voice that's going to tell the book, that's basically your idea of the book. But your book becomes in the ownership of your readers. And they may hear a different voice.

So I wonder if one thing that fiction authors could do is to use their advance reader teams and ask them who they think, what sort of voice, get some extra input.

**Because particularly fiction, if it's a series, you'll probably going to stick with that voice for a few books. A big decision.**

Tina Dietz: Oh, yes. Yes, absolutely. And I think that's a fantastic use of advanced reader teams. I think everybody needs to do that repeatedly if they can in that process because it's just like if you're a master carpenter, you know? You measure twice, you cut once.

If you're going to release an audio book prior, or with the other versions of your book, and you're not going to wait and feel out your audience and see how that goes, then you definitely need to use advanced readership teams.

And focus groups or however you want to say that as your audience to make sure that you're homed down into that right kind of voice.

As a matter of fact, one of the things I recommend for authors is that before you send your book into editing even, you need to read your book out loud yourself. Because you will actually get a better sense of who your characters are by saying their voices out loud. And you'll catch a lot of mistakes or a lot of strange places in your narrative that are awkward that you wouldn't normally catch by scanning it with your eyes.

James Blatch: That's a really good tip. A lot of editors say the same thing before you hand it over to a proof reader. At least read it out loud.

Let's talk non-fiction. We do talk to a lot of fiction authors on this podcast. I'm keen that we talk as much as possible to non-fiction as well. Because lots of people are in that space, and it's a growing, very fast growing space.

So non-fiction again, you talked earlier about credibility depending on the subject, that kind of believability. I guess one thing that runs through both of these is clarity.

**If you've got a predominantly English speaking audience, or probably an exclusively English speaking audience for a lot of books, whilst it might be romantic to have a Spanish accent or a Dutch accent or something, you've got to think about something that's going to be an easy listen for people who aren't native to that language.**

Tina Dietz: Definitely. Though if the author is native to say, Germany, or we've had a number, some authors in the UK. We want to honor that and make sure that there's not too much of a disparity between the author's voice and the narrator's voice. So it needs to be clear, like you mentioned, and at the same time we have to trust our audience to be able to kind of get with the program. And be able to tolerate it.

As long as the accent isn't too heavy, it's not a problem. And that's really where having a deeply finessed narrator really comes into play. But truly, if the book is in another language, we can produce the audio book in any language. As long as we have the accurate translation.

James Blatch: I suppose a better example may have been strong regional accents, which in the U.S. can get quite strong, but in Britain, or the United Kingdom, can get really strong. I can go to places in the UK and not understand every third word that's being spoken.

**Colloquial language is nice, but it's got to be a balance, as you say, with clarity.**

Tina Dietz: Exactly. We tend to go for the most familiar accents. I can't even begin to parse apart because I haven't been traveled as extensively in the UK as I would have liked. But you're right, the regional accents are ... They're so varied. And in the U.S. they are, can get kind of crazy as well.

We tend to go for a more neutral, err on a more neutral accent or a more, we'll call it a classical accent, rather than something that has a lot of regionalism in it. Because it can start to grate on people's ears.

James Blatch: You talked about non-fiction authors, and we see this a lot using their books as lead generators, gathering visibility and interest.

### **Can audio books also turn a profit for non-fiction authors?**

Tina Dietz: Absolutely. Because a lot of non-fiction listeners tend to be college graduates, and they tend to have more affluent households, and they tend to be over 30.

So in terms of people who are, let's say, upwardly mobile, and professional, audio books have a huge audience. And so either they're looking to become better or they're looking for specific resources and areas of interest to them, whether that's business or parenting or spirituality or health.

The rise of audiobooks and why they're so popular is because of their mobility and people who are in that demographic category are people who are really busy people, so they love to have the portability of the audiobook because you can listen to audio, just like podcasting.

When you can't read a book, you can listen to it. When you can't watch a video, you can still listen, and so these people are always on the go and that's why audiobooks have become so popular is because it's the most accessible form of media, audio.

James Blatch: Podcasting has been a revolution and we'll talk a little bit about podcasting before we finish 'cause that does also work very nicely for non-fiction in the non-fiction space, but the way people listen today has changed dramatically simply because of that type of choosing.

It's happening on TV as well, but you're sat in front of your TV when you press buttons and watch everything on demand. In the old days you had to sit there when things started but because you can walk about with your radio programs now, your podcasts and your audiobooks.

**Suddenly people are devouring books during their washing up, doing the hoovering or doing their jogging and that's changed everything really.**

Tina Dietz: It really has James. Remember when we used to have to get up and walk across the room to change the channel on the television?

James Blatch: Well, I had servants but they did that for me 'cause I'm British. No, absolutely.

Tina Dietz: I'm clearly both a heathen and a barbarian so I understand.

James Blatch: I remember my first chum who had one of these chunky remote controls and yeah we dreamed of having that one day. And everything has changed quickly.

Tina Dietz: Right? It was like magic.

James Blatch: I'm a bit geeky. I like the technology but that's irrelevant compared to the liberating aspects of what it brings and the fact that you can go on a car journey, you can go for a 10 kilometer jog. I probably measure myself on 10 kilometers, not 10 miles and you can listen to an entire audiobook in a couple of days or learn a new subject ... learn a new language as some people do.

Although actually learning languages was something that did adopt this very early on. Actually before the podcast revolution. I remember the adverts on TV where you get a set of headphones sent to you with all these

CDs, so they knew early on that this was a valuable way of taking on information.

Let's talk a little bit about podcasting. We're on a podcast. You do a podcast. So we know about podcasts.

### **Why are these important for people to understand that there's a place for them in business?**

Tina Dietz: In business we find that most experts come to me looking to launch a podcast thinking that they're going to grow their audience and they tend to be people who would prefer to speak rather than write.

And they also want to have a platform that allows them to connect with other influential people, and feature guests and or feature their own expertise but what they don't tend to know is there's two different types of podcasting.

There's podcasting as a business and there's podcasting for your business and what most people in the business world do is they podcast for their business which means that they're looking to generate leads. They're looking to build an audience. They're looking to become more influential.

Those types of podcasts are excellent for doing all those things, spreading the word, spreading your message. They don't tend to on their own generate a lot of income. They might generate sponsorship down the road.

They certainly can develop a lot in the way of return on investment and relationships. Tremendous return on relationships.

However, podcasting as a business is a different animal and that is where you're really developing a show that has income potential right off the bat. It's a show that is tapping into an existing audience that is really hungry for additional content and already has tremendous popularity, so for example

the Trivial Warfare podcast took the concept of pub trivia and turned it into a podcast. So kinda like a game show. Very, very popular podcast. Does great with all kinds of sponsorship.

My friend Glenn owns the Horse Radio Network. Horse people love ... I mean they're just nuts about horses, right? They spend so much time and energy and money on horses.

He's in that world and he's developed I think now a network with more than a dozen shows, with all the different facets of horses and has this tremendous business that is sponsor-driven because people love listening to all these different shows about horses. But that's a very different animal than somebody who is say ... Michael one of the shows that I launched some years ago. He's a financial expert with a large following.

Very prolific in his content and had a day a week where he wasn't publishing blog content and decided he was going to do a podcast to accommodate those people who really wanted to be listening rather than reading and his podcast took off like crazy because he already had built an audience.

On the other hand, another show I launched, Katrina Ubell, who has the Weight Loss for Physicians podcast was focused on a very, very niche audience of overworked physicians who wanted to lose weight. I mean think about that, that is a niche audience.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Tina Dietz: But she's done extremely well. Gets tens of thousands of downloads per episode because she niched down and she's really speaking specifically to an audience that wants her message and her information and that's a solo show. She's not doing interviews and it has built her business tremendously and she launched that show right from the

get go of her business. She didn't have a preexisting audience. So it can work a lot of different ways.

James Blatch: Wow. Show me the niches, I'll show you the riches. The old saying goes and still works.

Tina Dietz: That's right.

**James Blatch: The main income stream is sponsorship. That's the one you kept coming back to in terms of a podcast that makes money is likely to be via sponsorship rather than selling a product.**

Tina Dietz: You're either generating leads for your own product or you are offering sponsorships.

The third way of generating money is something that I've been encouraging a lot of independent podcasters to consider, which is what I call reciprocal marketing and this is where you get say a group of physicians who all have their own podcasts and you basically spend time advertising on each other's podcasts with the assumption that you have similar audience, so none of you will necessarily change ... money might not change hands, but it's more of a cooperative arrangement or a collective arrangement where let's say Katrina's show, who I mentioned. She does weight loss for physicians.

Another show that a doctor runs is called The Science of Self Help and she gets on and she demystifies different aspects of self help from the science. Well if Katrina on her show wanted to say, "Hi, I'd recommend that you listen to Dr. Jennifer Greer's show, The Science of Self Help, and you can demystify all of those myths and what the science is of different self help modalities. I suggest you give it a listen. Check it out here." That would make sense and vice versa.

So that's one of the things I'm encouraging independent podcasters to do is to find their tribe and build your audience in a way that makes sense cooperatively.

James Blatch: The weight loss podcast aimed at doctors in how they can deliver weight loss to their patients or aimed at doctors themselves losing weight?

Tina Dietz: Doctor themselves losing weight.

James Blatch: I thought that's what you were saying. That is niche!

Tina Dietz: Yeah, very niche and she's got a huge following!

James Blatch: Wow. Good. There's a niche.

I love podcasts and we love producing them and it's an unexpected part of my life 'cause I've wanted to be a broadcaster since I was little and that's why I joined the BBC and slaved away for 12 years. I love microphones and being in studios and all of that. Always have done.

And I thought that was gone the day I walked out of the BBC. And suddenly this podcast is a really important part of our business and I love it. So I'm a big advocate of it.

I know some people are terrified of it. Sometimes we have guests who are nothing like as confident and relaxed as you are. We have guests who are terrified of being on air and one of the things I say to people is that anybody can do this.

The old idea of you being some kind of TV presenter is rubbish. You just have to be yourself and it's difficult like everything it takes a little get going.

**Once you start going, the more you do it, the more relaxed you'll become and anybody can podcast.**

Tina Dietz: I completely agree. It's really a matter of getting comfortable with your own voice and your own message and finding other people who feel the same way that you do!

James Blatch: Great! Well, look, we've whizzed through our slot on this show. I'm just having a quick look down at your notes because you kindly sent me some stuff in advance Tina and I know that we haven't got around to a couple of things like for instance, the work life balance.

I know it's something you think a lot about and that's something that does play into our audience's mind a lot because quite a few people are trying to get the writing career going at the same time as having a 9 to 5 job and authors quite often never switch off.

**But this is something you obviously do a lot and you've managed to get some balance in your life or have you? Or have you?**

Tina Dietz: I like to think that I have, yes.

James Blatch: I know that's an important part of what people should do. So if people want to find out more, Tina, where do they go?

Tina Dietz: The easiest URL to find me at and find out everything that we've got going on is [startsomethingpositive.com](http://startsomethingpositive.com).

At [startsomethingpositive.com](http://startsomethingpositive.com) you can find out about audiobooks, podcasting, and we do have a lot of tips on work life balance, how to get out of your own way because that's something that I certainly have done a lot of work on myself with and worked with lots and lots of clients.

People from six, seven, eight different countries, 20 different industries around the world that I've been working with for decades now, so it's not just the external journey about publishing your book. It's about the internal journey about becoming who you are as an author and as someone who's got a message to give to the world.

James Blatch: A storyteller as we alluded to earlier. We are humans and we devour stories. Always looking for the narrative.

Tina, from Florida, thank you so much indeed for joining us. We've really appreciated it and give that website once again.

Tina Dietz: Sure. [Startsomethingpositive.com](http://Startsomethingpositive.com).

James Blatch: Perfect. Tina, thank you very much.

Tina Dietz: Thanks James.

**James Blatch: When did you get into audiobooks, Mark? How's it something that you did straightaway at the beginning or did it take you awhile to think about that?**

Mark Dawson: I think I was doing ACX as soon as it became possible to do for through the UK so I don't know how long ago. It must be three years ago now, something like that that I did ACX and then the Milton Books ... rather than doing ACX I decided I'd deal directly with Audible so Audio studios publish those for me. Just makes it a little easier.

Would I make more money if I did it myself? Possibly but I do pretty well with Audible and it's one less thing that I have to worry about.

Unfortunately there's only one of me so it's quite hard to do everything that I'd like to do myself. Sometimes it's necessary to hand it off to somebody else.

James Blatch: There is a school of thought now that you should be getting into audiobooks very early on. It's not something to leave on the back burner later because it's potentially money on the table.

**As Tina talked in her interview, the growth of audiobooks is outstripping the growth of other areas of reading at the moment.**

Mark Dawson: Definitely it's an area that people are getting into. It's very convenient now. When I'm driving to Wales this afternoon to do an Amazon academy event with Louise Ross - I just realized there's two Ross' and me and some Amazonian. I've got two hours in the car and I'll probably listen to an audiobook I should imagine as I drive there.

So yeah it's absolutely a big growth area and one that I think we'll see quite a lot of changes in the next 18 months or so.

James Blatch: Great well Louise Ross, LJ Ross, who's a very, very successful author online.

Mark Dawson: I'll say.

James Blatch: She's been doing brilliantly and she's a good talk on the subject but she's been a little bit shy I think or reluctant to do a podcast interview but we have nailed it down and I'm going to be meeting LJ Ross in October in London.

We're gonna have a podcast interview with Louise and I'm really looking forward to that so she's excellent on the subject. She does sit on panels at various conferences as you allude to today, but she's one I've been chasing for the podcast for some time so I'm delighted we've bagged her.

Right. That's it for this week.

Mark Dawson: Bagged her.

James Blatch: Yes. Bagged her. I know you-

Mark Dawson: Good grief.

James Blatch: I can see you sliding down the carry-on innuendo roll.

Mark Dawson: No, it's like I just imagined you in the African Savannah with a shotgun. Yes. We've bagged another guest.

James Blatch: I've bagged another one! I'm a lover, not a hunter. That sounded wrong. All right. On that note.

Thank you very much indeed for listening. I hope you found that interview useful with Tina and definitely think about audiobooks if it's not something you're getting into at the moment.

But in particular I found some of the practical advice from Tina very useful in that interview. She was a great guest so we'll probably revisit her at some point. Thank you very much indeed.

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If you want a particular guest on, you've got some questions for me and Mark, we'll probably do another Master Class episode in the next few weeks, so if there's areas that you'd like us to talk about, just let us know. That's it. Thank you. Have a great week. Bye bye.

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