



EPISODE 154: HOW TO BE A GREAT DICTATOR – WITH DANIELLE NORMAN

Speaker 1: On this edition of the Self Publishing Show.

Danielle Norman: What's the one thing everybody loves about kids' books? They're fun to read out loud. Have you ever read a book and you go, "That sentence just doesn't sound right"? It's because they've thought with their fingers, not with their mind. Stories are meant to be read aloud.

Speaker 1: Publishing is changing. No more gatekeepers, no more barriers, no one standing between you and your readers. Do you want to make a living from your writing? Join indie bestseller Mark Dawson and first-time author James Blatch as they shine a light on the secrets of self publishing success.

This is the Self Publishing Show. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Yes, it is the Self Publishing Show. My name is James Blatch.

Mark Dawson: My name is Mark Dawson. Not Michael Caine.

James Blatch: No. You almost forgot your name.

Mark Dawson: I did.

James Blatch: You just say, "Mark J. Dawson," sometimes, Mark Dawson other times.

Mark Dawson: That's me.

James Blatch: John. Is it John? Jeremy?



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Mark Dawson: Jonathan.

James Blatch: Jonathan.

Mark Dawson: Jonathan.

James Blatch: Jonty. Jonty Dawson could be your PI name, because you're doing a-

Mark Dawson: No.

James Blatch: What's your procedural? Who's your hero of your police procedural?

Mark Dawson: He's called Atticus Priest.

James Blatch: Atticus. Wow. Obviously a nod to Atticus Finch, I'm guessing?

Mark Dawson: Absolutely.

James Blatch: What author wouldn't be without a nod to Atticus Finch at some point in their writing career.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. My dog is called Scout, so there's another nod.

James Blatch: Yes. Excellent. Well, we can talk about you some other time. We talk about you a lot.

Mark Dawson: I like talking about me, though.

James Blatch: We're going to talk about 2019, coming up, once you have, in real life, got back from Bali, even though this episode goes out at that point. We are batching, as we sometimes do, over Christmas.

Mark Dawson: Blatching.

James Blatch: Batching. Blatching. Batch Blatch.



Mark Dawson: You're Blatching.

James Blatch: We've got some great episodes in the can, and this is one we picked up, actually, in the autumn, in-person, in Florida, I believe.

This was a NINC interview with Danielle Norman. This is dictation. I know you've got your own experience of dictation from 2018, so let's hold that in abeyance, Mark.

Let's hear from Danielle, and then I'm going to talk to you a bit about your experience. So, let's hear from Danielle about the art of dictation for authors.

James Blatch: We are here. Danielle.

Danielle Norman: Hi.

James Blatch: Hi. Welcome to the podcast.

Danielle Norman: Thank you.

James Blatch: So, tell us a little bit about you.

Danielle Norman: Oh, I'm boring.

James Blatch: You are not boring. We've had a little chat beforehand, and there is nothing boring about you.

Danielle Norman: Okay. Let's see. I'm new to romance writing. Almost a year.

James Blatch: Were you writing before?

Danielle Norman: I was. Children's books.

James Blatch: Okay.

Danielle Norman: A lot of them.



James Blatch: Yeah.

Danielle Norman: Yeah. Harper, Random House, Simon & Schuster.

James Blatch: We're going to talk about dictation, because that's something you've really got to grips with.

Danielle Norman: Yes.

James Blatch: But you've got an interesting background, and most excitingly of all, if people are watching this on YouTube, take your glasses off and look into that camera. Who did Danielle play? Who was she for the Walt Disney Company? And the answer, of course, is Snow White. Beautiful Snow White.

You were Snow White at Disneyland. Or Disney World.

Danielle Norman: Yeah. Disney World. Let's get it straight. One's California and one's Florida.

James Blatch: So, you had the little girls hanging off your arm.

Danielle Norman: I did. I loved it. It was wonderful.

James Blatch: I bet. I mean, you can't not be happy doing that job.

Danielle Norman: Oh, my gosh. It was just fun going to work every day. But, of course, back then I didn't have to wear a wig because my hair was black, back then, because come on, I was 30 years younger. Oof. Yeah. A lot younger.

James Blatch: So, that makes you Walt Disney Royalty, when you're Snow White. You are treated as royalty, aren't you?

Danielle Norman: Oh, very much. It's a wonderful company. I have to say that. I don't care how much people go, "Oh, the crowds." I have stories that would just flip that. They're good.



James Blatch: That's lovely. And you wrote children's books.

Was that an overlap with your Disney experience?

Danielle Norman: I always wanted to write children's books. When I was looking for a change in career, I told my husband that I wanted to write children's books. I was going through a time where I had to change careers, because I was going through breast cancer, and we had just found out I was Stage 4.

We didn't even concentrate on the fact that I was Stage 4. We didn't even take that in. He goes, "24 hours. 24 hours. Cry. Get it out. In the morning, you're going to tell me what your new job is."

So, I said, "I want to be a children's writer." And within two weeks I was on a plane flying to a children's conference to learn how to be a writer.

James Blatch: Wow. So, that decision was made.

Danielle Norman: It was made. I wrote my first children's book, but I dictated it. The reason was because, every time I would sit at the computer and try to write, the stretching would hurt.

I was told that it would take about five years to break into the industry, which is very standard. And children's, you really need to go traditional. Just to have that vetting process to go into the schools.

It was seven months. I pitched my story, and this man goes, "I want that." I didn't know who he was. Come to find out his name's Justin Chanda. He is the VP of Simon & Schuster.

It ends up being this multi-book contract. I end up with one of the top agents, seven months after. And we've come to find out the reason was they said I had found my voice so early in this writing career.



I thought back, "How did I find my voice so early?" Because voice is one of those things, as a writer, we're always searching for. How do you find your voice? And I thought, "Well, how did I find it?" And it dawned on me.

Ernest Hemingway said that if you want to be a writer, you have to sit down and bleed. Well, that's what it was. My experiences in life, being Snow White, having breast cancer, everything I'd been through, is me. It makes me me. You tell me to write something, I'm going to write it one way. You tell someone else to write something, they'll write it a different way, because our experiences, well, how do we get that out? It's that blood. The things we've been through.

None of us grew up wanting to say, "Oh, I want to be a story typist." We grew up saying, "I want to be a story teller." That's all verbal. Well, how do you do that? You dictate. That's the verbal.

James Blatch: Dictation was there early on for you, for physical reasons.

Danielle Norman: And I believe that's where my voice came from.

James Blatch: How you tell stories. Okay. We should also say you've been battered by cancer over the years.

Danielle Norman: Yeah.

James Blatch: How many times has it-

Danielle Norman: Three times.

James Blatch: So, three times you fought it off. So well done.

Danielle Norman: Thank you.

James Blatch: And you're in remission now.

Danielle Norman: I am in remission.



James Blatch: Fantastic. Snow White smile for remission.

Do you think that being faced with having Stage 4 cancer got you to the point where there's no dilly-dallying? Or did it make you more decisive? Because it sounds like a very decisive period in your life.

Danielle Norman: I think I've always been a tough cookie, but I would say breast cancer changed me. I look at more of things and just go, "Really? That's what you're going to complain about? And the weight of the world? Really?" I do reevaluate things a lot.

James Blatch: So, when I go into my long rants on our car journeys about air conditioning in restaurants and stuff-

Danielle Norman: Really?

James Blatch: ... you're the one saying, "Seriously, James?"

Danielle Norman: Really? Yeah.

James Blatch: And you're quite right, of course, to say that. Okay. So, this is exciting. You had a traditional career, with Simon & Schuster.

Danielle Norman: And with several other publishers.

James Blatch: And we'll move on to the dictation properly, because that's what we're going to talk about, and I'm really interested in your story. And then at some point, led you to the point a year ago where you decided to move into romance.

Are you still doing the children's books?

Danielle Norman: Well, I have books coming out till 2023, because children's books take a lot longer to come out, because of fact checking and vetting, but also illustrations.

James Blatch: And you write under a different name for romance?



Danielle Norman: Yeah. We don't mix those two.

James Blatch: Just describe the books to us, the children's books.

Danielle Norman: Nonfiction. I write nonfiction for children.

James Blatch: Okay. On what sorts of subjects?

Danielle Norman: You name it. I had a book come out about Robert Goddard, the father of US rocketry.

James Blatch: Oh, cool.

Danielle Norman: Took that whole connection, you know.

James Blatch: Danielle's husband is a rocket scientist.

Danielle Norman: He is a real rocket scientist.

James Blatch: If I could find an excuse to get him on the podcast ... But I don't think I'd get it past John and Mark.

Danielle Norman: Oh, yeah. He would have a ball. He's actually trying to write a book.

James Blatch: Oh, is he?

Danielle Norman: See, there you go.

James Blatch: Put him in touch.

Danielle Norman: I will.

James Blatch: I may come and visit him.

Danielle Norman: He will love it. He will have a ball.



James Blatch: Yeah. Okay. So, those history profiles, that sort of thing. Okay.

And where do you find the illustrators? They come from the company?

Danielle Norman: Oh, yeah. Simon & Schuster, whatever, they find theirs. I have been in it long enough that I do have a little bit clout, yeah right, that I get to have say in who my illustrators are, but it took some time, and my agent negotiating that I get that say, now.

James Blatch: Okay. So you've got some power, now.

Danielle Norman: Yeah, right.

James Blatch: You're a player in the industry.

Danielle Norman: Yeah. Let's make me think that. Right.

James Blatch: And then you decided that you're going to try romance?

Danielle Norman: It was. It was over drinks one night at a fan book signing. A couple authors, who are wonderful, established authors, talked me into trying it.

We were talking about wild things that have happened to us, that just sounded like a romance story. I shared something that had happened to me when I was 17, and they all go, "You need to write that." So I did.

James Blatch: Intriguing.

Do you indie publish your romance?

Danielle Norman: I do. I indie publish.

James Blatch: Did you plan to do that from the beginning?



Danielle Norman: From the beginning, I wanted to be indie, I wanted more control. My husband is the one who takes all of Mark's classes. Sorry I haven't taken any of them.

James Blatch: It's okay. As long as someone does.

Danielle Norman: Yeah. He handles all of it. He handles all my ads.

James Blatch: Well, he's a rocket scientist.

Danielle Norman: Hello. Exactly. I'm not.

James Blatch: He understands Facebook algorithms.

Danielle Norman: That's right.

James Blatch: And you say children's books are difficult to indie publish. We do have some successful authors in that field, but traditional is better.

Danielle Norman: It is a much harder, because of the fact, where are your children? They're in schools. And to get into the schools, they go to the ALA, the Library Association, and they trust those publishers of having have done that vetting.

It is a much harder market.

James Blatch: But also, when you moved to indie, well, what are the things you've noticed? I mean, the pay's better, right?

Danielle Norman: Oh, my gosh, much better. And, I mean, that's coming from me where I had some really great advances. But it's still much better. But also, I can say the F word.

James Blatch: Yes, which you don't when you're describing, although Robert Goddard probably swore on the odd occasion.



Danielle Norman: I'm sure he did. But, I mean, I get to say it in my books. And I get to say it at book signings. I could never do that, of course, in the kids', and I naturally say that frequently.

James Blatch: So you're enjoying that. I didn't know Snow White ... She would never.

Danielle Norman: She would never.

James Blatch: And when you're wearing that uniform, that costume.

Danielle Norman: We never. Oh, hello, no never.

James Blatch: How many romance books have you got out?

Danielle Norman: Six.

James Blatch: Six. Oh, you're prolific. Which brings us on to-

Danielle Norman: Dictation.

James Blatch: You're actually giving a talk on dictation at NINC in Florida, where we are now.

Danielle Norman: I am. I am.

James Blatch: You're proficient, and expert, and now espousing this to other authors.

Danielle Norman: I am, because of the fact I was headed for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrator, for their conferences, and the reason is is because if you have an organized outline, dictation, if you have an organized outline, and you're writing, typing, you can type 500 to 1,000 words in a 30-minute section, because you need to organize.

If you're dictating, you can do 3,000 words in that 30-minute section. How much you can get done is so much more incredible.



Also, if you've been writing for any amount of time, we complain so much. Carpal tunnel. Our backs hurting. Our shoulders are hurting. We're always complaining because something's hurting.

Dictation, you don't have that. We have to think long-term. Our bodies. Dictation takes care of all that. And just the productivity of what dictation offers for us.

A lot of people, I know, one of the big comments I have in my class was, "It's scary. How do you get into this?" And my mom used to always, whenever I would face anything challenging, it was, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."

James Blatch: A little bit at a time. Yeah.

Danielle Norman: How do you face dictating? A little bit at a time. There are tons of softwares.

We always hear about Dragon, but that's not the only one. People don't realize, your Mac computer and your PC computer both have dictation programs in them? Did you know that they're both run by Dragon?

James Blatch: Oh, really?

Danielle Norman: That is who fuels that dictation software. If you have a Mac, because I have a Mac, it's the Function, Function key. You press it twice, your microphone comes up, and you can record. I'm not sure what it is on PC. Obviously, you can tell I have a Mac. But you can just search it. You'll find it.

There's so many ways to try it until you know that you love it. But the other thing is is that start with just recording your thoughts for stories.

We always have so many ideas running through our heads, but we've got a lot of ideas, and it's a lot to write down. Start with just saying those out.



Start with, from there, just start with talking out chapters. Use it in bite-size pieces. I still, to this day, I only dictate my rough draft.

James Blatch: Oh, really?

Danielle Norman: Don't expect perfection. I edit by computer. So, what I do is every morning, I look at my chapter, I study it for about 10 minutes, and then I'll dictate it.

I'm done dictating the entire chapter in an hour. I have about 6,000 words, and then I go through and I edit it. Tighten it, make it nice and polished, and I'm done.

James Blatch: On a keyboard.

Danielle Norman: On a keyboard. I'm done by noon, with an entire chapter of 3,000 solid words.

James Blatch: Wow.

Danielle Norman: In a half a day. A book a month.

James Blatch: I had a little go at dictation, but classically, dipped into it and then didn't really have time to follow it through, and I do know that you've got to persevere to make it work.

But the one thing I found immediately, which I think a lot of people raise, is that you think at a different speed than the natural rhythm of typing. So, when you're typing, you obviously don't type as quickly, you think a bit, which gives a little bit more time for the thought to be formed and the sentence to be formed.

And I worry that if I'm just speaking, and there's no natural pauses or resistance to that, that I'm not going to have time to get the sentences properly formed, or the writing will suffer.



Danielle Norman: Okay. First of all, I'm going to give you the opposite of that. For kids, what's the one thing everybody loves about kids' books? They're fun to read out loud.

James Blatch: Yep. Yep.

Danielle Norman: When you read a book, have you ever read a book and you go, "That sentence just doesn't sound right"?

James Blatch: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Danielle Norman: It's because they thought with their fingers, not with their mind. Stories are meant to be read aloud.

James Blatch: My editor does say, "Read your chapter aloud before you submit it."

Danielle Norman: Even when we read aloud, we're still reading in our heads, even if we don't read it with our mouths. So, that's how they're supposed to be done. That's why we're called storytellers.

So when you are dictating, stop looking at the frigging computer, don't watch it type, and just talk. Don't think about it looking like a story. What's the hardest thing to write? When you're writing, what's your hardest thing to write?

James Blatch: I don't know, really.

Danielle Norman: A rough draft?

James Blatch: I enjoy a rough draft. I'm enjoying my writing at the moment, so, oof.

Danielle Norman: But, I mean, is the rough draft not the hardest?

James Blatch: Yes.



Danielle Norman: Get that first draft down?

James Blatch: Yeah.

Danielle Norman: That's it. That's what I use dictation for.

James Blatch: Okay.

Danielle Norman: Get that rough draft down.

James Blatch: I understand that, but there is obviously a period of adjustment. Did you take to it straightaway?

Danielle Norman: I didn't have a choice.

But my thing is, don't go in it expecting miracles. Don't go in it expecting a finished product, because you don't get a finished product.

There is very few authors I know that go all the way through their dictation, all the way through edit with it. To me, it's to increase my speed. It's to make me sit at the computer a lot less time. It's to get me out from behind that computer much more. That's what dictation's for.

James Blatch: So, physically, you say, don't look at the screen. How do you do that? Because you've got a microphone.

Danielle Norman: Turn your chair around. Close your eyes. I bought Bose noise canceling headphones.

James Blatch: I'm wearing them.

Danielle Norman: Exactly. I wear those. It cuts out how much I have to hear myself. I put those on and I just talk. Who cares if I have to think about what I'm saying next and I'm just sitting there quiet? What's it going to do, record, "Nothing"? I mean, come on. No big deal.



James Blatch: I was going to say, you can of course record onto your iPhone whilst you're driving, or go on a walk.

Danielle Norman: Exactly. I will tell you, one of the best things I bought is probably one of the cheapest. It's a Sony Dictaphone. \$47. It was Amazon Prime. \$47. It's Sony. Just type in Sony Dictaphone. There's all different price ones.

This one's \$47, and it has a little USB that just slides out of it, plugs right into your computer, and transcribes all of it. It holds hours and hours. And I just carry that in my purse, all the time. I now have it right over there. I always have it with me, and I'm always talking into it. I'm walking the dog, I'm sitting outside, I'm doing whatever. I'm at the grocery store, I'm unloading groceries, I'm talking into it.

And so, a story idea hits me, but I do my premise with it, then I'll do my outline with it, once I have my whole story plotted I'll then do my outline with it. And then I do my rough draft with it.

James Blatch: Wow. And when you turn up to the grocery store, do some people say, "There's the crazy lady"?

Danielle Norman: Oh, yeah, but they say that anyway.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Danielle Norman: That in my hand or not, yeah, "There goes that crazy lady."

James Blatch: Especially if you're doing a murder mystery.

Danielle Norman: Yeah, yeah, oh my God. I was researching how to sabotage police motorcycles, and I'm asking the Harley mechanic, because our officers ride Harleys. And of course, there are a couple Orlando police officers who are standing behind me.



I'm going, "What's the best way to sabotage that police officer motorcycle?" I'm like, "Oh, crap, I'm so in trouble."

James Blatch: We've all had those strange moments.

Danielle Norman: Oh yeah. That's right.

James Blatch: So, you're going to talk about it at NINC, and what are you going to say to people? Because you know what the common questions you're going to get are.

Danielle Norman: My class here is for those who want to try it, they're scared, where do you begin?

You begin with starting with the little things. Don't go invest all this money. I mean, that, to me, is the biggest mistake, because you go and invest \$500 because the program, you know, is \$300, the mic they tell you to get is \$150, because it's a Blue Yeti is what they recommend, and then you go, "I have to get \$500 worth of return on my investment."

That is very scary. Start with talk to text. We have that on our phone. Start with that.

There are several apps that you can get that are texting apps, talk to text apps. Start with that, but start with just those little pieces. Because, the whole idea is, don't expect perfection. Keep at it.

Do a little bit, and when you set up, when you start doing it, especially on your computer, if you're using the computer's recorder, it learns your voices. It learns how you speak. Because, all of y'all have accents. Of course, I never have an accent. Everybody else does.

James Blatch: You don't. You don't have an accent at all. We've got outrageous-

Danielle Norman: I know. Y'all have the accent.



James Blatch: This is the Queen's English.

Danielle Norman: Yeah. Exactly. See, I don't.

I always say, get your own book. Read your own book. Let it record you. Let it type to your reading. That way it knows what you're saying, and it gets used to the kind of words you use, the way you say things.

James Blatch: I know that Dragon software has that learning ability, but even the software built into my Mac?

Danielle Norman: All of them should.

James Blatch: Well, as you say, it's made by Dragon.

Danielle Norman: That's right. But then, there's also Google Dictate. You can just open your Google Docs. They have a Dictate.

That's my least favorite. I find a lot more problems with that. Don't watch yourself. Don't watch your cursor. Don't watch it, because then you realize all the mistakes it makes. Don't do that.

Let it just go. Come back to it. And then, don't worry about all the punctuation. Don't worry about saying, "Period, open quote, close quote, comma." Don't worry about that.

I worry about one thing and one thing only. New line. I'll start talking, and then every time it's a really new thought, I'll say, "New line." And when I'm done with a section, whether it be a scene, whether it be a chapter or just a section, I'll stop, then I go through and, while it's still fresh, that's when I tighten it. Then I go back.

James Blatch: So, you do that as you go along?

Danielle Norman: About every hour or so I'll stop and I'll do it.

James Blatch: And what sort of word count are you up to now?



Danielle Norman: What do you mean?

James Blatch: In terms of your work rate, your word current rate?

Danielle Norman: I do about 6,000 words an hour talking, and that's very standard for anybody just starting. That's pretty much what we talk. If we know the basis.

And if you screw up, let's say you're thinking something like, "Oh, gosh, no, I've got a better way," talk over it. Keep going. Don't stop. Because when you go through and edit it, and you've realized you've said three different ways of John picking an apple, you'll know to cut two of them.

James Blatch: This is why you revise straightaway?

Danielle Norman: This is why I revise straightaway. The other thing is that, you know, I'm Greek, and so a lot of my characters are Greek. And Greek names are not exactly the easiest to transcribe.

So don't worry about, if you're using a unique name, or if you're a fantasy author, or a paranormal, and you have created this fantasy world with unique names, don't worry about trying to have it spell those words. Instead, come up with a small word.

For me, a lot of times, I'll say, "Hero." Just hero. Or heroine. And then all I do is I go search, you know, Command, F, find hero, and replace it then for the hero's name.

James Blatch: Constantine or whatever.

Danielle Norman: Exactly.

James Blatch: Okay.

Danielle Norman: And so, that's how I do it. It makes it a lot easier. So, don't freak about all that stuff. Chill.



James Blatch: So, by the time you've done your draft, you've gone through the book like that. You've got your first draft, effectively, has been done with one revision.

Danielle Norman: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Blatch: And I guess the beauty of going in and tidying up the full stops and paragraphs is that at the same point you're also doing a little bit of actual revision as well.

Danielle Norman: Oh, yeah.

James Blatch: So, it's a slightly more polished first draft than some people might end up with, when they get to the end, if they're typing.

Danielle Norman: Oh, no. I mean, by the time I'm done, it's not a revision any more. I mean, it's solid.

James Blatch: And at that point you go to edit, editor?

Danielle Norman: Yeah, I mean, by the time I'm done ... It takes me a month to do a novel.

James Blatch: Right.

Danielle Norman: Start to finish.

James Blatch: Plotted out?

Danielle Norman: Plotted, everything. And I am definitely a plotter.

But what's so nice is if you do it this way, it's even good for the pantsers, bause you're talking this whole idea in your head, and you're letting it plot for you, in a way. Because you're just talking it out.

And then what happens is you can print it off, this whole idea, and whether you knew it or not, all of a sudden, you spoke this whole outline out into



5,000 words. And so, you've kind of used your own pantsing way to plot the story.

Then, you can look at, "Okay, this is the first section. All right. I'm going to now talk it into 6,000 words," or, "4,000 words."

James Blatch: Clearly it is working with you. How many books did you say you've got, in your romance?

Danielle Norman: Six. My seventh one's getting ready to come out.

James Blatch: Within 12 months?

Danielle Norman: Yes.

James Blatch: So, you're doing a book a month, or two months tops.

Danielle Norman: Well, and that's what's nice, is I can do a book in a month. That's plotting, everything. But when I'm done with the book, I take a few weeks off. I don't. I ride a Harley.

James Blatch: Oh, you do? You have a Harley?

Danielle Norman: I do have a Harley. That was my turn 50 and let's go wild. Got a tattoo. Got a Harley.

James Blatch: Cool. We're all waiting for John to get the tattoo and Harley. I can see him on that.

And how's it going, the romance writing?

Danielle Norman: I'm new, so, I don't know. What am I comparing it to? Me?

James Blatch: But you're selling some books?

Danielle Norman: I am. So I'm having fun.



James Blatch: What subgenre is it?

Danielle Norman: I'm contemporary, more of the romantic comedy.

James Blatch: Oh, okay. Okay. With the odd F bomb.

Danielle Norman: With the F bomb like crazy.

James Blatch: Which I can tell you're quite excited about.

Danielle Norman: My series, it's about a group of girls who watched Sons of Anarchy and decided ... I mean, they're kind of a Louboutin-wearing, spa-loving, who decided they're going to create an all-women's motorcycle club, but still be, you know, funny women.

James Blatch: Do you have online resources for dictation? Is this something you're taking forward as a of passion of yours?

Danielle Norman: People can email me. I'll tell them whatever they need.

James Blatch: Okay. You don't plan a nonfiction book or anything like that?

Danielle Norman: No. I'm not a very good teacher.

James Blatch: But you've stepped up to the plate here to talk about dictation.

Danielle Norman: Oh, no. I can talk. I mean, hello, I have no problem talking.

James Blatch: Well, that does go along with dictation.

Danielle Norman: Yeah. That's it exactly.

James Blatch: Well, Snow White, cancer survivor, more importantly, which is fantastic, and we're so excited that you're in remission from that, and got your second career. Who knows what genre you'll be writing next year? I'm



going to come back and you'll be saying, "Here's my science fiction series, James."

Danielle Norman: Yeah. No.

James Blatch: "It's about Space Davidsons." And a lot of big things in space.

Danielle Norman: That's it.

James Blatch: It's been brilliant. Thank you so much, Danielle, for joining us.

Danielle Norman: Thank you.

James Blatch: That is Danielle Norman. And now, Mark, you're a great dictator, aren't you?

Mark Dawson: I am a great dictator. Yes. I'm very keen to improve my dictation.

It's been interesting. I've mentioned this before on the podcast. I was always very reluctant to do it, because I felt I would be self-conscious, it would change the way that I write, so not physical any more, but more taking the hands out of the equation, taking the keyboard out of the equation, and going straight from my head to the microphone.

I was surprised, very pleasantly surprised, at how effective it was. The new police procedural which I've been noodling around with for six weeks or so, the early writing, the first 40,000 words or so, I dictated those. And I did it in about four or five days.

So, my production was just through the roof. Way, way faster than I normally do. I say 2,000 to 3,000 words a day when I'm typing is something I'd be happy with, but I was getting 2,000 to 3,000 words an hour. And not terrible, either. The quality wasn't terrible, too. So, I was, yeah, very impressed.



And, as I get older, I get more aches and pains. Thankfully my hands haven't actually been affected. I drop things quite a lot now, because my hands can get quite stiff. But as we get older, I think it will be very helpful to have an alternative way to do the bulk of the writing. And if speaking works, it's got to be worth a try.

James Blatch: I know you're using dictation quite a lot for emails, because occasionally I'll see something that you've said has been very phonetically or quite comedically translated.

I guess that is part of the process of dictating, is that it's a first draft of a first draft, if you like. You even have to tidy it up before it becomes a first draft.

Mark Dawson: You do. It's great for emails. I get dozens of emails. Well, more than that, sometimes. And I like to reply to as much as I can, and it's a very good way to do that.

It actually takes me back, weirdly enough, to when I started working professionally, out of law school, going into law, and I had a secretary. So, even as a 21-year-old trainee lawyer, I had a secretary, and they gave me a dictation machine, which is a little tape going into the machine, and you click it on. You then dictate your letters or your memos, whatever it was, and I'd hand the tape to my secretary, and she would then type it out.

Now, eventually, I stopped doing that, because it was faster for me to write those myself. Older lawyers would still do that. I'm sure they do still do it. I think there's a Dragon for lawyers, now. There certainly is one for doctors.

It just takes that element of not having to actually do the typing yourself, because you might not be very fast, and to give it to someone else who is. And instead of a secretary who can do 60 or 76 words per minute, you go to an algorithm that can process almost as fast as you speak it. So, it's just progress, you know? Modern world. Ain't it grand?

James Blatch: Yes. It's that old joke, to use a Dictaphone.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Mark Dawson: Yeah. This is a family podcast, Mr Blatch. We won't mention ... My apologies to listeners around the world who are now offended.

James Blatch: Well, I haven't got to the punchline, so they can't be offended. Yes, I did notice that one you sent me in an email. I think you had said, "You let us know how many new readers," and your dictation said, "You let a snow how many new-"

Mark Dawson: No. I normally check everything before I go out, but sometimes ... If I'm sending it to you I don't give a ... So-

James Blatch: Yes. Exactly. Yeah. Oh, I thought you said this was a family podcast?

But the point is if you read that out, "You let us know how many new," you know, it works phonetically.

Mark Dawson: It's pretty good. Yeah. The accuracy is fairly high.

But it's not good with words it doesn't know, for example. I had a character called Malander in the new book. It got that wrong over and over again. You obviously can train it to get it right, and eventually it will pick it up, but, even if you're having to go back and make those kinds of amendments, it's still going to be light years faster than doing everything the old-fashioned way.

James Blatch: Yeah. I've run out of colors for my background, so that's the end of our batching session for Christmas and New Year for the Self Publishing Show.

You're back from Bali at this time in the future, and next week will be contemporaneous, again. And at some point, we have quite a few podcasts lined up. In fact, well into the future at the moment. Got a lot of interviews to go.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Got a really good one on newsletters coming up. But I think we are going to have that look forward to 2019 and sit down with you, and try and predict, read the runes, if you like, of which way things are going. And they have changed, shaped, quite a lot in the last year or so, so there's a lot to talk about with that.

You can support the podcast, if you'd like to, at Patreon.com/SelfPublishingShow. You can find all the show notes and everything else, you'll see the URLs at the end of this podcast.

And, of course, join our Facebook group, a thriving community of indie authors who want to help each other to success. And that's it for this episode on dictation, with Mark, the dictator, and James, the benign democratic-

Mark Dawson: Dictatee.

James Blatch: Democratically-elected leader. That's it. By the way, it's quite interesting, now, because we have no idea whether we've got a country left at this point, this is going out, in January, I presume.

Such a state of flux in the United Kingdom at the time of recording. So, we might be living in America by then. Who knows?

Mark Dawson: Could be. Or all go to Bali. That's actually why I'm going.

James Blatch: Yeah. Just stay in Bali. Thank you very much. We will be back next Friday for another edition of the Self Publishing Show. Goodbye.

Mark Dawson: Bye-bye.

Speaker 1: Get show notes, the podcast archive, and free resources to boost your writing career at SelfPublishingShow.com. Join our thriving Facebook group at SelfPublishingShow.com/Facebook. Support the show at Patreon.com/SelfPublishingShow, and join us next week for more help and inspiration so that you can make your mark as a successful indie



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

author. Publishing is changing, so get your words into the world and join the revolution with the Self Publishing Show.