



## EPISODE 155: THE NECESSITY OF NEWSLETTERS – WITH ERICA RIDLEY:

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

Erica Ridley: Unsubs are your friend.

It is like a self-cleaning oven. It is keeping your mailing list in order for you, and actually it is also an opportunity, because when someone unsubscribes, it doesn't necessarily mean that they hate you.

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 the 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, here we are the Self Publishing Show with me, James Blatch.

Mark Dawson: And me, Mark Dawson.

James Blatch: We get picked up on me and I quite a lot and you use it correctly as the Queen does when she says Phillip and me. And then we get five emails from people saying, "It's Phillip and I. It's James and I." But it's not, is it? It's Mark and me.



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Mark Dawson: I'm not getting involved in that. Honestly if you are sending emails about whether you use me and I correctly, um, well, I won't swear. We'll let them have their moment.

James Blatch: Well, I'm about to do the patron shout out, so we'll get a collection of emails about my lack of understanding of American States in a minute.

Mark Dawson: That's fair enough.

James Blatch: Anything directed at me is fair enough.

Mark Dawson: I'm happy with that. Anything directed at me is off limits obviously.

James Blatch: Okay. Look. Let's do the patron shout out before we do anything else and I've got a couple of things to talk to you about 'cause it's been a few weeks since we sat opposite each other virtually like this.

We want to say a big thank you to our Patreon supporters. If you go to [patreon.com/selfpublishingshow](https://patreon.com/selfpublishingshow) you can sign up to support the podcast. As little as a dollar and as much as three dollars an episode.

It means a huge amount to us. Not least because we're talking about buying new market funds to really add to upping the ante in production values that we've done recently and it keeps us going. It gives us a buzz every time you support us. So, thank you so much for coming on board.

I want to say a huge thank you to actually it says, James Sealey here from Arizona.

Mark Dawson: Sealey James.

James Blatch: I think it's Sealey James.

Mark Dawson: Yes.



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James Blatch: Unless there happens to be a James Sealey who's joining us, but we're going to say I think that's probably Sealey James, so thank you -

Mark Dawson: If there is a James Sealey, hello James. Otherwise, I'm pretty sure it's Sealey, so thank you Sealey.

James Blatch: You'll have to let us know. From Arizona in the United States of America. I was also going to say a huge welcome and thank you to a guest on the podcast, Audrey Hughey. So, Audrey, thank you so much for becoming a patron supporter as well, it means a lot to us. From WV.

Mark Dawson: Goodness.

James Blatch: Not Wisconsin. West Virginia?

Mark Dawson: No, Washington.

James Blatch: West Virginia.

Mark Dawson: No, I have no idea. Which one?

James Blatch: West Virginia. Maybe?

Mark Dawson: Yes, could be.

James Blatch: Could be. Could be West Virginia. From Sarah Williams. Thank you very much indeed for joining us as a gold level patron supporter. She's from QLDAU, which of course is Queensland, Australia. Up there in the beautiful tropics.

And to Ben Follows, thank you Ben from Ontario in Canada. From Anne Bartalucci, another person we've had on the podcast in the past. Anne was an excellent guest to talk about sleep if I remember rightly. Is that right? Anne Bartalucci, thank you from GA. Georgia in the United States.

Peter Lakeshore. Thank you very much indeed, Peter. We have no addresses for the following: Carl Artman. Thank you Carl. Matt, here we go,



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Quintana. Quintana. Easier than it looks. Miranda Burnett. Thank you Miranda. Andrew McClure. And Christina Knapp. And T.R. Cameron.

You have all joined us this week as our patron supporters. You've all been to [patreon.com/selfpublishingshow](https://patreon.com/selfpublishingshow) and we are delighted to have you as part of team SPS here at the Self Publishing Show. Thank you very much indeed.

And if you're a new listener to the show, we get emails every now and again from people who say, "Oh, I just discovered you and I'm plowing through your back catalog." And that's always good to know.

You should know that you can go back in time through the Self Publishing Show, which was named something else at the beginning. If you go to ... well, [selfpublishingshow.com](https://selfpublishingshow.com) will take you to the podcast page and you can see all our podcasts there.

What to chat to you about, Mr. Dawson? You've been on your travels. You've been to Bali in the Indian Ocean for 20 Books Bali, which was a little bit different from 20 Books Vegas. It's like the rich aunt to Uncle Vegas.

Mark Dawson: It was great. There was, I don't know, 35 authors there usually with their partners. So, maybe I'm overestimating that a little bit, but it was a fairly small conference, but in a really gorgeous hotel.

It was probably the nicest conference I've ever been to organized by Craig Martel, who you're speaking to tomorrow for the podcast. Really great.

I did the first session which was fun and then there were all those like Kevin Jandinson was there who has written some Dune books, some Star Trek, Star Wars, that kind of stuff, so we're going to get him on the podcast. So, you can get your geek on with him later on.

And, who else was there? Plenty of really good authors. Michelangelo was there. Had a good long chat with Michael and with Craig. It was just a really lovely four days away. It's a long flight for us, 17 hour flight to get there. We



were there for four, maybe four and a half days. We didn't leave the hotel basically. It was really lovely. Some time off for Lucy and me. Um, Lucy and I. Let's not go there. And with the kids with the grandparents. So, it was lovely. We had a really great time.

**James Blatch: And in terms of usefulness for you as an author, this Jedi-like state that you are as an author, was it useful?**

Mark Dawson: Yeah, it was. There was some interesting bits and bobs that I gleaned throughout the conference and really those things are more about having an opportunity to chat with people over a slightly longer period of time that you might not otherwise get to have those opportunities.

I had a slightly boozy conversation for a couple hours with Dan Wood from Draft2Digital, which was ... always love talking to Dan. That was fun. As I said, a couple of long chats with Michael Andalay. Michael is coming to London Book Fair and we're going to have dinner in London just to talk about some things that we might be suited to together.

And just generally hang out with the authors some of whom we've had on the podcast before and it was fun. I'd definitely do it again even though I don't think ... I think Craig isn't going to do Bali next year, but he is thinking about doing one in Alaska where he lives.

James Blatch: Wow.

Mark Dawson: Which I would actually, I would go to that, because -

James Blatch: I would love to go to Alaska where he lives.

Mark Dawson: Northern lights and all that kind of stuff. So, yeah. I'd be up for that.

James Blatch: I might put my name down for that as well. Good. Well, that sounds great and yes, I'm interviewing Craig tomorrow. Five a.m. Alaska time. I just did query with him on an email to say -



Mark Dawson: My goodness.

James Blatch: "Are you certain that's correct? 'Cause I can shift the time on this end." He goes, "Nope. That's the best time of day for me." So, that's the kind of work ethic Craig has which is great.

I had lunch this week with Kinga ... I want to say Yenetics, but I think everyone pronounces her name Genetics. Kinga Jenetics and she's kind of going with that 'cause it sounds like a Bond villain or somebody who's in biotech, who is the very impressive CEO of PublishDrive.

You mentioned Dan from Draft2Digital and PublishDrive I guess are competitors of Draft2Digital doing a similar thing in a similar space aggregating books out to all the platforms. She showed me some of the changes to the platform that they're rolling out at the moment and they're working hard as D2D do at making this a very useful and powerful tool for Indies. Making life a little bit easier.

**On that front Mark, where are you on that? Do you like to still have control and upload your books to each individual platform or do you use aggregators like Draft2Digital and PublishDrive to do that for you?**

Mark Dawson: I'm in KU exclusively in the moment, so I don't have those issues, but with new releases I go wide for about a month and where possible the best advice is to do it yourself.

I love Draft2Digital. I've been using them for a long time and they have enabled me to get into Barnes&Noble, which is a little bit more difficult for UK authors than it is for people in the U.S. and also some of the smaller stores places like Scribd or Script have their what a call it ... 24 signs I think and they've got a slew of others that you can get into.

You can use them to get into everywhere, but the best advice, go directly. It's not difficult and you'll be able to run promotions more easily than you would if you went through an aggregator. Apple as well, and Apple, if you don't have a Mac, it's quite ... Apple's uploading is convoluted to put it



kindly. So, there is an argument to be made for going into the Apple Store through an aggregator. It would make things a lot easier.

On the other hand I've been going direct with them for ages. So, it's not a big deal for me to keep doing that, but you know, as I often say, horses or courses, it really depends on what your priorities are.

James Blatch: One interesting thing about PublishDrive and we got an interesting interview with Kinga coming up in the next few weeks is that. I think both Draft2Digital and PublishDrive take ten percent roughly that ten percent of your royalty for the service, but PublishDrive has taken the rather bold step of capping that at 100 dollars on their subscription plans.

So, for authors, in fact, for you, Mark, authors turning over 1000 dollars a month plus, in your case a lot plus, I would imagine that's going to be quite an attractive thing. It will be interesting to see whether D2D respond at some point with that.

Mark Dawson: Yep.

James Blatch: We'll keep a watching brief on those developments in the area.

And we should just say it's January, so we're planning the year and SPS we'll have a presence of some sort at at least three conferences in 2019. No, four that I can think of.

We're going to start the year in March at London Book Fair, obviously in London as the name suggests and that's mid-March, early mid-March, 12th, something like that. 12th, 13th, 14th, I think from the top of my head. We will have a drinks bash on the Wednesday night, venue to be announced in London.

So, if you're anywhere within spitting distance of London, come along and grab a beer off me, Mark, or John. We may even have our new man there, Tom, may come along to that as well.



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After that it is going to be ThrillerFest in New York. So, at the moment if you're not down for ThrillerFest, Mark, but John and I will go to that for sure. That was a brilliant place for us to pick up interviews with some really exciting and high-profile authors last year. So, we'll be hoping to do that on behalf of the Self Publishing Show. Grab you some big names. Again, that'll be our aim for the week.

We will then go to NINC in September, which is held in Florida. NINC is Novelists Inc. and if you don't know the organization it is sort of exclusive in that there's criteria to join. So you have to be a published author or self-published author with a certain amount of success. You can look up the criteria on their website.

The conference is a very positive and I think very useful ... I think last year I saw more people with wads of notes coming out of sessions at NINC than almost anywhere else. I think a very useful one as well. Especially my session, I thought they came out with a lot of notes from that.

And finally 20 Books Vegas. The 20 Books is such a vibrant and exciting community. I can't tell you. I'm still feeling a little bit lifted from being there in the autumn last year, 'cause to be in the company of 700 odd other Indie authors, talking the language of Indie authoring is great. Instead of having those conversations that you have with people every now and again, "Oh, isn't it a bit vain publishing your own book?" Or "How do you get an agent these days?"

You're in a room of people who are way past all those basics about what Indie authoring is all about and are into the weeds of how to make it work. All tribute to Craig and to Michael for all the work they do. So, we'll be back at 20 Books Vegas in November.

If you're at any of those conferences, we will at some point be at a bar with our credit card behind ... shaking hands and buying some drinks and we'd love you to come and say hello to us. I think 20 Books Vegas is probably the



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popular one. I think that's the most popular one. Especially if you're romance, obviously ThrillerFest won't be a big deal.

I should say we're not going to go to this year, but actually in New York just after ThrillerFest is RWA.

Mark Dawson: That's right. I've been to the last two of those and they haven't asked me back this year. So, I don't know what I did last year.

I think it's not a bad idea to have a fallow year, and I'll probably go back the year after, next year. I'll go back to that, but yeah, that's just after ThrillerFest.

James Blatch: Now, today's interviewee, actually is somebody who we bumped into at one of those conferences last year. We bumped into Erica Ridley at NINC and started talking to her about newsletters and I think you were impressed in what she had to say and the way she approaches newsletters.

This is a subject, it's a big subject. We get asked it a lot and I know that authors worry about it. I'm hoping on coming to publication this year, so I will be one of those people thinking about what do I put in my newsletter, how frequently do I do it, how do I look after my mailing list and so on, and Erica thinks a lot about this, is very intelligent on the subject, very intelligent anyway.

We sat down with Erica. So, that's today's interview and I think we'll probably hear from Erica now, then Mark and I will have a quick chat about other things off the back of that. So, let's hear from Erica.

Okay. Erica, first of all welcome to the podcast.

Erica Ridley: Thank you so much for having me here.

James Blatch: All the way from Costa Rica.

Erica Ridley: Yes.



James Blatch: Here to Florida, but it feels the same. Tropical here. What's it like in ... Costa Rica's quite high?

Erica Ridley: Yeah, I live in the mountains, so it's about 70 to 80 Fahrenheit year round.

James Blatch: Nice.

Erica Ridley: So, low 20s I guess Centigrade.

James Blatch: Yeah. I love the heat, but I think I struggle a little bit in it. So oppressive, isn't it?

Erica Ridley: It's very hot, yes.

James Blatch: Yeah and it's nearly October. Okay. Anyway, that's the weather 'cause we're British, we have to discuss the weather for a few minutes.

**Welcome to the podcast and you should perhaps just tell us a bit about who you are before we go on.**

Erica Ridley: I currently write historical romance. I have about 20 books out. Prior to writing full time my original background is in marketing. My degree is in International Marketing and Business and then I worked for about 20 years in the corporate world doing marketing, advertising, websites, things like that, which has really helped me when I made the jump from traditional publishing to Indie publishing.

James Blatch: Excellent and we're going to talk specifically about newsletters and the emails today, but let's learn a little bit more about you.

**So, historical romance. Where and when are they set?**

Erica Ridley: Regency England. 1811 to 1820.

James Blatch: Okay. That's quite specific.



Erica Ridley: Yeah, well, it's the only period as you probably know in England's history where -

James Blatch: Prince Regents.

Erica Ridley: That's right.

James Blatch: Yeah, we do wonder whether it might happen again, because the Queen, bless her, is an amazing individual, is going into her 90s now and people occasionally speculate that Charles may become a regent at some point.

Erica Ridley: A regent, fascinating.

James Blatch: You'd have to have a sequel series.

Erica Ridley: Yes.

James Blatch: The second regency. And your Spanish fluent as well. I know 'cause you live in Costa Rica now, so it's been useful.

### **Do you write in Spanish as well as English?**

Erica Ridley: I write in English, although I do go to writer's conferences and have writer friends in Costa Rica of course, where I live my life, in Spanish. But truly right now the market in Spanish isn't really as good as the English market by a long shot. So, right now I'm focusing just on English.

James Blatch: Okay. But like all these things in the digital world, any more people coming online so that will change in the future.

Erica Ridley: Yes.

James Blatch: And you'll be well placed for that. I'll send you my books for a translation. Okay. Good. So, a bit more about your book.

### **How many have you written and published and how's it going for you?**



Erica Ridley: I've published probably about 20. There's a few that will never see the light of day. Hopefully. So, that's going pretty well actually.

When I started with traditional publishing it didn't make the hugest splash originally, but moving to Indie was very helpful.

It took me about a year to figure out best practices for how to really launch a career, but I was able to get a fairly good following. I had a couple lists on my own, so that was exciting. It has been fun just to watch things snowball and build it feels like every year.

James Blatch: And is now your full time -

Erica Ridley: Oh, yeah. Yes. It's definitely my full time. I'm pleased to say I'm doing better as an author now than I ever was in my previous job which I did not think would ever happen. So, it's exciting.

James Blatch: That's excellent. Good. Well, that's good to hear. Okay, so we're going to talk about mailing lists and really when we think about what an author needs to set up it's one of the fundamentals and it's something that Mark preaches a lot.

Erica Ridley: Yes.

James Blatch: Still occasionally meet people who say, "Ah, I don't want to do a newsletter." And I think as Maria Lewis on this podcast said, whenever someone says that to her she says, "Why would you not want to do a newsletter?" So, let's talk about these.

### **First of all here we are in late 2018 is it still in prime position for something an author should do?**

Erica Ridley: It is absolutely fundamental and I too am always shocked when I meet people and they either don't have a list or they have one and they've never actually sent anything to it. They're missing out on one of the most



powerful tools that we have and own and isn't dependent on anyone else's whim.

James Blatch: Yeah. So, that is a key part of this, isn't it?

Erica Ridley: Absolutely.

James Blatch: People can buy your books on Amazon, they can leave reviews, they can you know, leave comments on various social media platforms, but unless you've got their email address, you don't own that.

Erica Ridley: Amazon is not going to show that.

James Blatch: In terms of a list as a commercial part of the set up, how do you see it working for an author?

### **What are the key things a list brings an author?**

Erica Ridley: So many things. Of course when you are asking people to sign up for a list of any kind the least information you ask from them the more likely they are to sign up.

At the very basic level you want their email address so that you can communicate when you have news which can include sales, new releases, appearances, signings, whatever.

But if you have more data, you can help them help you. You can help create your own kind of one click environment instead of automatically sending your readers to a certain retailer if you know they prefer another one you can do it that way.

If you're part of a promotion that's only in English language countries or just in the U.K. or whatever you can segment and you can just really give the reader the kind of experience that they're looking for with frequency and content.

James Blatch: Make it as easy as possible for each reader.



Erica Ridley: Exactly.

**James Blatch: And how do you suggest doing that? 'Cause as you write you're saying we're a bit wary about this in our SPS business of asking for too much information when you're simply trying to get somebody to sign up to your list.**

Erica Ridley: There's a couple tricks there. If you're truly doing a push just to get people on your list then in that case I will always recommend just ask for the email address.

But you definitely want to have optional fields in their profile where they can go in and you can encourage them to do so in your onboarding process or any time later to update their profile with information.

For example, on mine I ask where do you buy your books? What store of this hand-dandy drop down list is your favorite? And not everyone fills it out; however, I can figure it out on my own, because the reporting after you send out a newsletter will let me know did you click Kobo, did you click Barnes & Noble, and even if they haven't told me, just with a couple clicks on my end I can update that data for them and then I know going forward and I can provide them with a better experience from that moment on.

James Blatch: And then you can also make that easier with custom fields in an email.

We shouldn't probably assume people have too much knowledge on this at first. Some people will be using this stuff and some people won't know what we're talking about. So, let's talk to those people as well.

Erica Ridley: Sure.

**James Blatch: If I'm on your list and you've deduced I use Kobo. How would you then use that?**



Erica Ridley: How would I use that information? There's a couple different ways. If you are not a very techy person, then probably the easiest way would be to segment your list and if you have just a Kobo promotion just to send to the Kobo people or whatever.

If you're a little bit less fearful of putting in a little bit of code, there's a thing that's called Conditional Merge, which is kind of like an if, then statement. If they shop on Amazon, put in the Amazon link. If they shop at Kobo, put in the Kobo link.

That's what I do, because it allows me to send just one email instead of sending out different versions to different people, but at the end of the day it all does the same thing. So, there are many methods to get the same results.

James Blatch: Yes, it depends how confident you are with it.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.

James Blatch: And just to explain that.

**You would say, okay click this link to download the book and that's the point at which the code, so your end looks a bit messy, but then up on their end it's just a link to the correct store.**

Erica Ridley: That's exactly it. I've done some A/B testing and it turns out that even though, regardless of me knowing where you like to shop I will include links to all the retailers, because maybe you've gotten a new device. Things can change, right?

But in all my A/B testing, the reader is more likely to click on the book cover than any textual link and that is where I can make it go to the place that you wanted to go. And so I will do that.

James Blatch: Oh, okay. That's clever. The book cover is the bit where it's -

Erica Ridley: That's what they're going to click.



James Blatch: Most customized to them. Okay, okay. I like that. Well, while we're talking more technically talk about the platforms available to you.

Erica Ridley: Sure.

James Blatch: And gosh, there are probably 25. You and I could probably name 25 straightaway.

Erica Ridley: Easily.

James Blatch: There are lots of options and there's some big ones that people know, MailChimp I guess is the obviously one.

### **What do you recommend in terms of where people jump in here?**

Erica Ridley: It's always a little bit of a sticky wicket, because some people are more price sensitive or they actually don't want too many options, because they're afraid of the platform of whatever.

If you are starting from zero and you don't have a platform, I do usually recommend MailChimp, because you can have up to two thousand subscribers for free and that usually gives you a chance to play.

And even on their free platform they allow automations and things that are very powerful. So, you can kind of jump in and see all the things that you can do.

Once you amass a big list in theory if you were developing a good list, then even as it gets more expensive, it doesn't matter, because you are making that money back every time you're sending out a newsletter anyway to promote your books.

But for more price sensitive people there are other platforms like ... I have not personally used MailerLite and ADmeme and those, but I know there are many authors who do and have chosen them because of their pricing more than anything.



James Blatch: Yeah, we have MailerLite talked about a lot for pricing and a lot of people say it does more as the same as ConvertKit, but it's a better price point.

Erica Ridley: Right.

James Blatch: Although we should also may MailerLite have had a couple of technical hiccups in the last 12 months.

Erica Ridley: Yeah, unfortunately. Anytime I've heard it come up recently I have had to mention that, because it is very concerning.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Erica Ridley: When you're on a shared server you definitely don't want to be on a shared server with someone who is spamming or something like that, because if your server gets caught in a block list, even though you've done nothing wrong, your email also doesn't come through. That was one of the issues that they had this past month.

James Blatch: It was, and they were very upfront about it. They were honest about what happened, which I think was a good sign.

Erica Ridley: It was excellent.

James Blatch: Yeah, in terms of how they're moving on from that, but it's definitely worth doing some research, but MailerLite is definitely one. We can choose MailerLite module two or one course, because people have asked for it.

Erica Ridley: Oh, good. Yeah.

**James Blatch: Now we have Convert Kit as well.**

Erica Ridley: Convert Kit a good one too.



James Blatch: MailChimp is more sophisticated now than it was when we started.

Erica Ridley: Yeah, in fact they just did a redesign this week, because they're trying ... kind of like Dunkin' Donuts -

James Blatch: Oh, no. Means we gotta redo the MailChimp module now.

Erica Ridley: I guess. Yeah, sorry.

James Blatch: Thanks.

Erica Ridley: Kind of like Dunkin' Donuts is taking the word Donuts out of their title, because they want to be known for more things.

James Blatch: They're just Dunkin' now?

Erica Ridley: They're just Dunkin' now, which makes no sense without an object to dunk, but whatever. I wasn't on their focus group.

James Blatch: Looks like you can't dunk it. Hello.

Erica Ridley: MailChimp is trying to focus on more than just mail. Now that they do landing pages and ads and all these other things, they're trying to kind of make sure people are aware of all the other things that they can do.

But one thing I would say besides just price probably the most important thing when you're looking at which provider to do is think of all the ways you want to use it.

One of the advantages of MailChimp is all its integrations. Basically, anything that integrates with that email service provider, MailChimp is usually one of them. And there are several others that integrate with different things whether that thing is Facebook or InstaFreebie or Zapier, the list goes on.



But just kind of think of how you want to use your list and make sure you are set up to not give yourself additional work exporting and importing and all these kinds of things.

James Blatch: That's a really good point. We live and die by Zapier in particular. It sits between a lot of our platforms, so making sure that whichever you choose comes up on a Zapier list, and again, people might now know what Zapier is.

Zapier is a little service that you subscribe to that allows you to have a flow of information. So, in fact I think I haven't done it yet, but I was telling John we are moving from Happy Fox to Zendesk our help service and we're using both and I'm going to use Zapier for anyone who leaves a message on Happy Fox, it will auto generate an email into Zendesk. Exact sort of thing it does.

People on Facebook ads, Mark uses it to drop the Facebook email address to his lead gen ads into Infusion Soft that we use.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.

James Blatch: So, yeah. Make sure things integrate.

Erica Ridley: Yeah.

James Blatch: It's getting a bit technical in here, but it's quite difficult not to talk technically a bit about this.

**In fact, let's dwell on that for a second 'cause this does terrify some authors. I can already imagine maybe someone listening to this thinking I could never do that. I could never do all this technical stuff. I don't know what they're talking about.**

Erica Ridley: Right. So, usually I don't tell people you don't have to. It's kind of like when you are given a new car. You need to know how to drive the car and do all the basic functionality, but if you never went to use its built in



GPS system or you don't want to use its WiFi to hook up your kids iPad to Netflix or something like that, it's okay. It's all going to be fine as long as you can get from point A to point B, which is what we're trying to do with newsletters.

But I do think it's important to know what options are available to you so that you get the right car, right? So that when you decide that you do want to something else, because it can be problematic to switch from ... I don't want to say problematic, but it can be time consuming.

There are many things that can come up when you switch from one provider to another and just a short pro tip there, you don't want to use the default sign up links that MailChimp or Admeme or anyone else gives to you.

You want to have an Evergreen link so that if you are putting your sign up link in your back matter of your book or on your bookmarks or whatever and you do change your mind later for the reason of whatever ... there's a new great thing that comes out, readers can still find out.

James Blatch: Yeah, so you give erica.com or is it ... what's your author name?

Erica Ridley: Erica Ridley, so ericaridley.com would be mine.

James Blatch: That port between whatever sits in the back of it.

Erica Ridley: Exactly. Exactly.

James Blatch: That's a good pro tip. And changing service providers is worth mentioning because we have a traditional trail I suppose it used to be before MailChimp became as sophisticated as it is now. We would generally recommend that people did migrate from MailChimp to ConvertKit.

Erica Ridley: Yeah. Exactly.



James Blatch: Made it like level next. We've gone all the way to Infusion Soft, which is probably more than most people would need.

Erica Ridley: Right.

**James Blatch: That's not a straightforward process moving between platforms.**

Erica Ridley: Yeah, because every provider does things a little bit differently. They handle segmentation or automation and so sometimes particularly with their templates, for example.

If you're updating widgets instead of having just a whole template of code that you're copying and pasting in there can be some time-consuming elements to recreate your environment.

**James Blatch: We're getting to the point where MailChimp does enough now that most authors could stay on it?**

Erica Ridley: Oh, I would say so. I think most authors just even ... I don't even think they're using a fraction of what MailChimp now does.

James Blatch: Okay.

Erica Ridley: Now that it has all the customization and conditionals and automations and everything like that.

James Blatch: So they might come down to price after that 'cause MailChimp does get expensive once your list starts really growing.

Erica Ridley: That is true. Yes. From MailChimp on up with the service providers it gets a little bit pricier, but again, if your list is quality and you're sending out the kind of content that your readers are responding to, then it shouldn't be an issue.

James Blatch: Which brings me on to the next area to talk about. I've dealt with the basics of having your basic platform.



## **How should people be using their mailing list?**

Erica Ridley: I'm going to back up actually slightly. People are saying, "Okay. So, I created this mailing list and now no one's in it. I have 11 people, you know? How am I getting the people?"

So, the first thing that you want to make sure you're doing is you take that Evergreen link and you put it everywhere. It should be in your bio, on all the vendor platforms, on book club, any time you do an interview, any time you have anything anywhere.

I usually even have it as my first line. First line in my Twitter bio and my Facebook, you know, everything like that. I'm a total nerd, so I do use tracking links sometimes and I know that it works that people are coming from there.

If you're Indie particularly, then you have the advantage of being able to put it in your front and back matter of your book, which not only is helpful for people who are downloading your book, but also people who are doing look insides and see, things like that can be, "Well, maybe I don't have the money to buy the \$7.99 book right now, but I'm interested. Maybe I'll join the mailing list, see what it's all about, and when it goes on sale I'll hear about it." Or something like that to get more people funneling in.

Once you have them signing up from your mailing list, now what? So, the first thing I want to say is you definitely need some sort of automation. Even if it's only just an original welcome letter that's your basic minimum and it should go out immediately.

Am I going to fast?

James Blatch: I'll pause you there. So, you're talking here about something that automatically flies back.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.



**James Blatch: When somebody signs up initially. So, it's not like you see somebody signed up and then a few hours later get to write them a welcome email.**

Erica Ridley: Yeah. That's why a service like Zapier or whatever can come in handy, because they can make it happen within 15 minutes which is not too much of a delay of whatever provider you're using doesn't integrate.

But this is the moment, this is really the key moment. This is when they are the most excited about signing up for your newsletter. So, you actually have an opportunity to do many things all at once.

So, for example, they're signing up and you have both the automated welcome email that goes out, but also the confirmation page. So, your confirmation page you can up-sell them.

You can give them something else that maybe they might be interested in. Perhaps it's a box set. Perhaps it's your Facebook. Perhaps it's whatever. And kind of give them a line up, a little extra for having joined up for your list.

And then the same thing in your welcome email. Usually you don't want to start selling them right away. I would if possible give a good three, four, five email welcome sequence that drips in, often called a drip campaign, over a series of days or weeks to get them used to who you are.

There's been many surveys done and psychologically we are more likely to want to interact with, and that includes purchase from, people we feel like we know. Just like people feel like they know celebrities and they run out and buy the Kardashian's game or perfume or whatever, because they feel like -

James Blatch: You know me so well.

Erica Ridley: Yeah, yeah, they feel like they have that connection and that's something you can do and should do.



The reader signed up for your list, because they're interested in you. They know what your book is. They want to know more about you and so kind of give them that. That's what they're looking for.

If you have what is often called a reader magnet or some sort of gift for them, a little additional push to get them on your list, even better. Give that out with your welcome email.

A lot of people have asked me if they're traditionally published or they're in hybrid or whatever the case may be, perhaps they don't have a book to give out is all hope lost, it is not. There are 30 or 40 other things that you can send instead of that.

You could use a deleted scene. A bonus epilogue. A bonus prologue. If your book has recipes, use that. If you're a forensic psychologist maybe it could be some piece of research or detail or any kind of thing. The reader just wants to know more about you and your story world and just give them a reason to sign up.

Then make sure you deliver on whatever the promise is that was in your hook for signing up in the first place, right? Sign up for my list, which also, from a wording perspective, I usually don't recommend saying, "Sign up for my newsletter." I think that's a mistake. That is a favor to you, the author.

You always want to word everything as a favor for the reader, and of course, you're not wording it, you actually are granting a favor of some kind.

James Blatch: Sign up here for your free whatever.

Erica Ridley: That's right. Sending my free book, my free recipe, my free bonus epilogue, or whatever the thing is, a coupon for 20% off or whatever the thing is. Then deliver on that immediately and then in your second email if you do an automation process, remind them.



Did they get it? If you didn't get it, here's that download link again and trickle in a little bit more information. They're not looking for your giant Wikipedia entry of your life story, but they do want to know a little bit more each time and it gives you a chance not to clutter them with demands up front.

I wouldn't put all your social media, all your vendor links, follow me everywhere in the first email. That's way too soon.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Erica Ridley: It's like a fourth date kind of conversation.

James Blatch: Yes. That's a good way of thinking about it. We're not first date people. We've built a relationship here.

Erica Ridley: We're ladies and gentlemen.

James Blatch: Exactly. Recency England. Think of that. Okay. So some really good stuff there.

A couple of important things that you mentioned just to reinforce that the lead magnet. If you've promised the lead magnet, deliver it. So, okay. Sounds kind of obvious.

That does mean being aware of how people are coming onto your list, 'cause you might have one landing page that gives away a free book. Another landing page which is at the end of a book where they sign up for something else you've created.

In fact, Mark had a brilliant one. His John Milton character is a washed MI6 spy. He did his personnel report.

Erica Ridley: Oh, nice. That's lit.



James Blatch: It could have been leaked from MI6. So, at the end of the book, when someone obviously got to the end, they've enjoyed the book and he said download John Milton's personnel file.

You got a really high percentage conversion rate on that. So, he has to make sure that he's aware that they've come on his list via that avenue and that email deliver what is promised.

Erica Ridley: Exactly. So, that is in again, your profile data and that's probably a field that visible to the user, but it's on the sign-up form and then in your automation sequence you can use the conditional logic like we mentioned to make sure they get the right item.

Another thing to consider is depending on what it is how are you providing support for this item? If it's a .pdf, most people can do that with no problem. But some people have never side loaded an epub or a MOBI before and they don't know what to do with that.

So, if you are only going to put it on your website as a download link, you have to be prepared to deal with the emails from people who are saying, "Eh, I don't know how to get it on my device."

James Blatch: Yeah, 'cause there's Book Funnel.

Erica Ridley: Which is what I was just about, I preach Book Funnel. I love Book Funnel.

James Blatch: I also love Book Funnel.

Erica Ridley: Yes. They are magical and they come up with new things.

James Blatch: We can't be happy about every single service that comes to us, but Book Funnel is the one that's kind of universally admired.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.



James Blatch: He's head of this conference. He's done a fantastic job at that. Mark remembers the days of sending out the links, dealing with the queries two or three times a day explaining to somebody who might be in their 60s who's never turned a Kindle on properly before.

Erica Ridley: Right. Yeah. You ask them what kind it is, they don't know.

James Blatch: People like John who's sitting there now. Can you imagine trying to explain to him how to put a book onto a Kindle.

John: What is a Kindle?

James Blatch: We'll be here a long time. So, that makes life easier, and listen in. You've talked about some of these conveniences in automation. They're a really important part of trying to set up a fire and forget process.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.

**James Blatch: You are concentrating on products, your books?**

Erica Ridley: Yes. And I love automations. I don't want to skip too far ahead, but I've automated a lot more than what your average person automates with their newsletter. Maybe later if we have time I can talk about some of my life hacks with that, but it's a very, very powerful tool. So, I would highly recommend only going with the service provider that gives you that option.

James Blatch: Yeah. At the moment we are talking about ... I mean, things like tags, which you get inside the mailing list would be enough for you to do a lot of what we've just spoken about.

Erica Ridley: Sure.

James Blatch: So, somebody comes in off of her particular route, fires Zapier and at the Zapier point you can have the tag applied to them so when they arrive into MailChimp or whatever it is. They got this tag, MailChimp can then recognize that.



Erica Ridley: Exactly.

James Blatch: Send them off to their particular email in response.

**Automation is a bit more advanced. Triggered usually by something like a tag.**

Erica Ridley: Oh, it can be triggered by any kind of thing.

I'm just going to roll back to the welcome sequence again, because I used a different kind of automation in there. So, on my last email in my welcome sequence I ask how long have we known each other. I read your first series. I read your second series. We're brand new friends. We're BFFs. I read everything you're ever written.

Depending on what they click, they get a different automation sequence. So, if they've only read the first series I ever wrote, then they get an email that introduces them to a different series with a little starter and you know, things like that.

And if they click the link that says I'm your BFF, I've read everything you've written in your whole life. I have a collection of your grocery lists, then they get a different one that invites them to be in my review crew for example.

So, that trigger is an interaction. What link they've clicked and you can also add to it and automatically tag them as these are street team leads or whatever. These are fans of if you write two different things.

If you write historical and contemporary, you can tag your readers that way based on their actions as being Amazon readers. There's all sort of things you can do to make your life easier by having it happen automatically.

James Blatch: So, you say you've got a slightly more advanced set of automations than most authors.

**Tell me, what service provider do you use, by the way?**



Erica Ridley: I use MailChimp primarily.

James Blatch: Okay, that's interesting. So, it really is able to do pretty much everything. It wasn't a few years ago.

Erica Ridley: I know.

James Blatch: It really had its limitations quite frankly.

Erica Ridley: It really did and I almost moved when I learned they were about to release some of these things that I do now. So, yeah. I'm glad they did.

### **James Blatch: What are you automating? What are your secrets?**

Erica Ridley: So, a couple things I also do besides ... well, your newsletter platform is more than just your readers, I mean, obviously that's your minimum. So, definitely do that.

And people have their different opinions on it, but if you do review copies of your books, there are ways to automate that to make your life easier. If you have a review team which is not to be confused with like bloggers and everything. You can automate that as well.

One service that I use is NetGalley. There are many other ones like Edelweiss that do similar things. And then the people that are on there which are book sellers, librarians, bloggers, influencers of various different kinds, can indicate when they download your book whether or not they would like to hear from you, the author.

Most people that I speak to have never done anything with this information. In fact, they've never even downloaded the spreadsheet. So, they don't even know that these people would love to hear from you in the future. So, they essentially already opted in through the NetGalley system. They must say yes or no, do they want to hear from the author. And so then the next time you have ... say that's book one in your series, the next time you have



book two come out and you put it on NetGalley, don't just wait to see if by the chance of God those people happen to stumble across it on the NetGalley website in time to download it before your archive data set. Email them. Let them know. Hey, book two is out. It's right here.

And if you do that every time and you keep adding the new people who are interested, then it just created this wonderful snowball effect that now if I put a book on NetGalley and I send it out there's a thousand downloads in a couple hours. It's crazy.

But it wouldn't have happened if I didn't do just like readers, they want to hear from you. They're on NetGalley for a reason. You write the kind of book they're interested in. They gave you a three, four, five star review. They want to know your next thing.

Let them know. And again, with an automation, you can make it just really easy. And then it's just one email that you send out and so then I do similar things, for example, promo tours. I'm very busy. I don't have a lot of time to sit around writing questionnaires, answers for Q&As and things like that, but I do want to have relationships with bloggers.

So, another thing you can do if you are like me and you don't have a lot of free time particularly leading up to a new release to answer dozens of individual Q&As with each -

James Blatch: I was going to ask you about that.

Erica Ridley: Yeah.

James Blatch: Because no matter how much you automate you are going to get ... well, I'll talk about readers as well, because some readers are going to email you and obviously bloggers and review copyists do require some -

Erica Ridley: Yeah. So, okay. Those are a couple different questions.

James Blatch: Yeah.



Erica Ridley: So, do you want me to go back to the reviewers before we skip ahead?

James Blatch: You started with the reviewers, but I'm also interested to know about your approach to whether you should answer readers' emails, et cetera.

**But let's talk bout reviewers. And these are smaller groups of people that require some intervention?**

Erica Ridley: Yeah. Although it's a very, very small scale. So, when I do upload my review copy to the service of your choice. I happen to use NetGalley, I create a special copy for that.

The first couple pages of front matter I'm not trying to get them to sign up for a mailing list or follow me on BookBub or anything like that. I know who they are, because they're on NetGally and they're downloading this.

So I can give them the information they need upfront. So, they don't need to email me for it. They may not already be on my reviewer list and I give them the link so they can sign up themselves and they do. And I give them a link to what I was about to talk about, which are media kits that I have on my website.

So, anything they might want to know about me, the book they're reading, the series it belongs to, how it fits in the world right now, is available for them at one click.

I put all that kind of information there if it's a librarian, I'm willing to come talk to your book club and all this stuff is there, which usually it's like frequently asked questions, right? You just answer them one time up front and then if you get a lot of questions about the same thing, you just add it to the next one.

**James Blatch: And you put this in the book?**



Erica Ridley: I literally put it in the book.

James Blatch: In a special version of the book.

Erica Ridley: It is a special review copy of the book. It doesn't just have a cover that says this is an advanced reader copy. It has additional content that is specifically for reviewers.

Help them help you. They want to know the context. Oh, this is the third book in the series. Oh, but it's stand alone. Blah, blah, blah. You can tell them and it helps them.

For example, if you have a tag line for your book or for your series or sometimes they'll use it. I mean, they want to spread the word. Maybe they don't have the way of condensing your 400 pages into a sound byte, but if you've already done it for them, it at least gives them something to riff off of. So a lot of that work is done for them, which they appreciate as well.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Erica Ridley: So, it's kind of the same thing. With the promo tours and with the reviewers I link to, as I mentioned, a media kit.

What's in a media kit? It's got my bio. It's got a Q&A. It has a short, medium, and long excerpt from the book. It's got all the different covers. Ebook, paperback, audio book or whatever. It's got all the different teasers.

So, you might have Facebook sized ones and you might have Instagram square ones or whatever, because you don't know how they're going to use it. But if you can give them everything they might need upfront, you are erasing a lot of the hassle of trying to figure out what they might want and then there are far fewer questions at the end.

James Blatch: I think the media kit, which might be a new concept to some people, but I used to work in a newsroom and I can tell you from being in a newsroom and from then doing some PR for some friends and other



companies afterwards, if you put together a good media or you receive a good media kit and use it, you are exponentially more likely to see that in print because we're lazy journalists and if you got images of your book cover, some quotes, your job is half done at that point and it's a very easy way to fill up a column inch.

I used to get people's books into magazines, aviation magazines by making it as easy as possible for the journalist.

Erica Ridley: Exactly. I've seen so many that are literally copy and paste, and so it's perfect. You give them the information they want. They'll just take it away. It's a win win for everyone.

James Blatch: You remember how lazy journalist are, you can never go wrong with that. Okay. That's great. A really interesting way of doing that. And again, making a nice bit of work to start off with, but the idea is that it then makes your life easier.

Erica Ridley: Yeah.

James Blatch: And if people do contact you, it might be to do a full interview.

Erica Ridley: Right.

James Blatch: Something above and beyond that you can provide which is great. So, you're not being contacted just to give them the basics.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.

James Blatch: So, the other interaction you can't really automate is emails back from readers. I guess at the beginning that's a flattering thing for authors. Over time, Mark gets the point now, there's several a day.

Erica Ridley: Yes.

### **James Blatch: How do you deal with that?**



Erica Ridley: You're absolutely right. At the beginning it's easy, and then suddenly ... one time in an email that I sent out it was at the end of the year and people always talk about resolutions and this and that or decide to do something differently.

I said what was the craziest most impactful thing that happened to you this year? And I got thousands of responses. And I didn't anticipate that. I was just like, I can't reply to all these and meet my deadline. It was this whole stressful period where I was trying to do all things.

So, just be aware the bigger your list gets the more engaged they get. They will respond to you if you give a provocative enough question or if you're incentivizing it with a giveaway or something like that.

Some authors will have a separate email that responses to their newsletter go into that they or an assistant can help with if it is easy questions, like if the question is, "Is there a series order?" Or something like that it may not require the author's necessarily intervention. They're not really trying to reach out on a personal level. They just have a factual question. I don't actually have someone that I pay to answer my emails.

James Blatch: You don't?

Erica Ridley: But if it's something like that, I don't see why there would be any issue with that. I will also say sometimes it does get overwhelming and you kind of have to make a judgment call as well.

So, one other automation that I do is a Happy Birthday one. If I know your birthday, then I will send you a little treat on your birthday and it's different every year.

If you've been on my list for eight years, you get a different gift from me every year. Not everybody does it, but about ten percent of the list does.

James Blatch: What sort of gift?



Erica Ridley: So, it could be a free book.

James Blatch: Not the Costa Rican beer you brought us?

Erica Ridley: Now everybody knows my secret.

James Blatch: That would be really cool.

Erica Ridley: No, something downloadable. Maybe it's a bonus epilogue. Maybe it's a free book from the back list. Something that could be fun.

One thing that I'm starting new this year, I just started a new gift. So, spoiler. It's a boxed set of books with other people that write historical romances is the new one. That's kind of a fun one.

Even if you've read mine, because sometimes my fans have read all mine, so there's nothing really they want from my back list, because they have it already. But it's great way for them to discover new authors as well. I'm a big fan of spreading the love.

James Blatch: Good answer. I think the little tips of what you actually do here are very useful to people because it brings onto really content.

Erica Ridley: Right.

**James Blatch: One of the worries authors have right at the beginning, what am I going to say? How often should I be emailing my list and what am I going to say to them?**

Erica Ridley: That is an excellent point. Usually what I tell people is whatever you promised up front, that's the thing you have to stick to.

If you tell people they're signing up for a new release only list and you have one new release a year, then don't suddenly become an every Wednesday spammer.



On the other hand, if you are saying join my list, I will share with you all the great things about my puppy and my twins and my this and my that, then that is why those people are signing up and don't suddenly go off the grid for six months and forget about them, because then you're kind of breaking that contract with the readers expectations.

There's no right or wrong answer just as long as you're meeting reader expectations. And if you're not sure, you can give them options as well. You can say, well, I have a chatty email that goes out every Monday or every month, or whatever your thing is, but if you want new releases only, you know, just click here and give them that option. And then you can segment and give the reader what they want, which is really the key thing.

James Blatch: We do that actually in SPS. We give people an option of course only, monthly summary, all the way to your email. Most people still up for the weekly email, by the way, but I think it stops the others unsubscribing.

Erica Ridley: Yeah.

James Blatch: 'Cause I don't really want the weekly email, but they would want to know when there's a course available.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.

James Blatch: So, just that stops those unsubs. We haven't mentioned unsubs. It is a fact of life.

Erica Ridley: It is a fact of life.

**James Blatch: How should people feel when somebody unsubscribes?**

Erica Ridley: Unsubs are your friends.

It is like a self-cleaning oven. It is keeping your mailing list in order for you and actually it is also an opportunity, because when someone



unsubscribes, it doesn't necessarily mean that they hate you. If you just sent out a really political email, maybe it does.

But in normal circumstances it can be for any number of things. Maybe they just signed up for a bunch of InstaFreebie promos and their email is overwhelming. Maybe they accidentally signed up under their work email. They're trying to switch or whatever the case.

Actually the moment of them unsubscribing, you have an additional opportunity. On the unsubscribe page is your one last chance to say or offer something to the reader.

So, what I have on that page for example if I'll say too much email? And I give them the opportunity if they want to follow me on Facebook or Twitter and I also say here is a free gift before you go.

I link to a couple promos that I have and just a bonus thing, because I want to make sure we're leaving on good terms. You know? It's not you. It's not me, you know, just keeping having warm fuzzies when you hear my name. I still like you. And it's often something that and people also unsubscribe in error.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Erica Ridley: Occasionally, so it gives another chance to reach out.

James Blatch: I always thought when people unsubscribe you're getting a more focused list as well, because if people aren't interested in your work there's no point in having their email address on there if somebody's not interested.

Erica Ridley: Exactly.

James Blatch: You create a more relevant list ultimately.

**Beyond people unsubscribing, how about list cleansing, list hygiene as some people call it. You're going in and removing people.**



Erica Ridley: I am not so that is a bit of a controversial thing and I usually tell people again, there is no right or wrong answer. It often depends if you're very price conscious particularly.

James Blatch: 'Cause you pay by the number of subscribers.

Erica Ridley: Yeah, you pay by the number of the subscribers and if you just have a budget of X, by all means, go in and clear the people that you can't tell if they're ever clicking on your emails or not.

But I will say although it's absolutely true that by cleaning your list your open rates go up, your click rates go up, is it just because you took out the people that weren't responding.

So if they're reading in a plain text environment or if they're just seeing the subject line and their going in and downloading your book elsewhere, you are losing that interaction by cleaning them from your list.

James Blatch: Yes, so just 'cause it says they aren't engaged doesn't mean they're not. They are actually unengaged until we are aware of that ourselves and when we look at the list.

Erica Ridley: Exactly. So, it's kind of a personal decision. I have cleaned twice and regretted it both times.

James Blatch: Interesting.

All right we're coming to the last few minutes. It's been fascinating. I mean, this is obviously a big subject and it hasn't surprised me the interview time has ripped through.

Two things I've got to mention to you, one is, did we mention GDPR?

Erica Ridley: Oh, we haven't mentioned it yet.

**James Blatch: We should mention GDPR.**



Erica Ridley: We absolutely should.

GDPR, although it is technically for the European Union, it affects all of us, because we all have readers from all over the world and the most likely thing is that's the direction the privacy is moving in.

People being more aware of what they're signing up for and explicitly signing up for lists. I usually tell people also there's a lot of these fly by night promos out there where everybody shares a spreadsheet of emails or when you join other authors ... and it's a terrible idea. Don't ever do it.

Because you definitely want people for many reasons, not just for the law, but you want people who actually care about your list signing up for it. Even before the GDPR thing, if you send out a campaign and it has too many unsubscribes or too many marks of spam, you can lose your account access just that easily as well. So, that's also a concern.

But definitely on your sign-up form make it very clear what the deal is, what they're signing up for, how often they're going to get it.

You should have a privacy policy that's linked on that very same page that explains everything that you intend to do with that data and how they can have you not do it just to make sure that you stay on the right side of the law.

James Blatch: We did a lot of GDPR, obviously it went through, but I have noticed that there was a debate about whether you needed a separate tick box for the explicit opt-in consent. Quite a lot of people said yes, but lots of very big organizations who clearly have lots of lawyers have not gone down that route. I've noticed they're still ... and as long ... my view personally, and I'm not a lawyer. I always have to say that.

Erica Ridley: Right.

James Blatch: Is that as long as you're making it clear people are joining your list.



Erica Ridley: That's my view too.

James Blatch: You're not going to get complaints from them.

Erica Ridley: Yeah. You're saying what's your email to sign up for my list and right underneath it: yes, I also want to sign up for your list. That's the whole reason they're filling out the form.

James Blatch: Exactly. So, we've been more relaxed about it now than we were at the time.

We've changed our landing pages. It turned out for no real reason, but it's common sense. If you're buying a CD full of emails and selling it out, clearly you would just have to be in prison.

Erica Ridley: Right.

James Blatch: They're the people the GDPR I think is really after.

Erica Ridley: Right.

James Blatch: Okay. Well, I'm pleased we dealt with GDPR quickly. My only, my last area 'cause you mentioned a couple of third party services, I mean InstaFreebie and so on.

**Are some of these good ideas people should be using? Are some to be avoided?**

Erica Ridley: I wouldn't say anything is to be avoided. I personally feel everything is to be A/B tested, because what does or doesn't work for me is most likely not going to be your experience when you try, but I would definitely caution with whatever service or promotion that you do to make it be as narrow and as on-brand as possible, because I do think it's a mistake.

Let's say you write paranormal romance. If you're just in a generic romance promo and you get all these people that maybe don't care about your specific genre much less your book, they're just downloading a whole



bunch of freebies 'cause they're on the page and they're on a high from free books. That's not a qualified lead.

I do think they're all very powerful. They can be to get people on your list, but you're also going to be skewed toward people inherently that haven't heard of you before. They're not going to be as strong as a fan as the people that come organically.

It can be good and I again, did enter it. I know how many people have come from different sources on my A list and they're definitely super fans that have come from promos I have done whether it was through a group of authors with Book Funnel or through InstaFreebie.

But also there have been a higher percentage perhaps of people who end up unsubscribing or whatever from those as well. So, just be aware.

James Blatch: And there are people who want a book for free as well. So, you aren't going to get ... well, you've ended up with super fans from there, you should be able to spot some.

Erica Ridley: Yeah. Look, a little bit off topic, but I believe in PermaFree and doing BookBubs and things like that. Those people are people that are getting a book for free or 99 cents, but that doesn't mean they're unwilling to pay for other books. They just want to try before they buy and I can understand that.

James Blatch: Erica, we've made John stand up long enough holding the iPhone. The camera's still working and yet we are all about to melt in here. It's been brilliant.

Thank you so much indeed for talking. We probably could have filled another 40 minutes or so and I'm sure we'll talk further in the future. Thank you so much for coming to the podcast.

Erica Ridley: Thank you so much. This has been great.



James Blatch: There she is. Erica Ridley. We were sat in John Dyer's bungalow to record that. He has a bungalow 'cause he's getting on a bit and I think the stairs, two level apartment was a bit much for him.

Mark Dawson: Poor John.

James Blatch: It was great to meet Erica. A very impressive person and that's one of the great things about, if I may say this for a moment about the Indie spaces.

I would think probably more so than traditional publishing, I might be wrong, but some of the very senior people like Kinga Jenetics who we talked about earlier, CEO of Publish Drive. You got Erica Ridley. You've got very impressive men and women on both sides.

Feels very new. Very equally split. Maybe a change from where we were a few years ago in that area, but yeah. Newsletters.

Mark, it seems to come naturally to you. Filling your emails. I'm on your list so I see everything that you've got to say, but a reasonable amount of planning goes into it as well.

Mark Dawson: I don't do quite a bit of too much planning. I sent one out on Friday and I almost forgot. I was like, oh, I gotta do an email today and so I did it in five minutes, just dictated it.

After speaking to Tammy LeBrec, who is another person who is very good on newsletters who will definitely get on the podcast at some point. She's done something for the Self Publishing university,\*not a university, which is well worth having a look at also if you're in, if you're a patron subscriber you can get that, look at that right now if you want to.

She gave me a kick up the ass when it comes to actually doing my newsletter more often. So, one of the things I've been doing is let's see. Well, for the last two or three months is putting one of my titles on a KDP countdown, Kindle Unlimited. I'm sorry, not Kindle Unlimited. Kindle. What



am I going on about? Select countdown ... Here I'm losing it. A countdown basically.

I do one every two weeks. And we'll email out and say something about the book that's on deal and maybe a bit of other news as well. I did this on Friday for my first ever self-published book, *The Black Mile*, and sold 1200 copies in 12 hours or so. Because it was down to 99 cents, 99 pence and you get 70 percent of that on a countdown deal.

So, made about a thousand pounds just by sending an email, which is kind of have to catch yourself sometimes. It's possible to do that.

That's all we need. I wouldn't normally before that have been emailing my list quite as much as I have been. But just speaking to Tammy makes me realize I was missing a trick there.

And it's been something that fans, they like it. They're on the list 'cause they want to hear from me and they'll be on your list 'cause they want to hear from you.

I think it's also important to just remind yourself that for these readers you may well be their favorite author. And to get an email in their in-box from their favorite author might well be the highlight of that person's day.

So, there's no reason to be worried about sending those kinds of things out. If you think about it, you're actually doing them a favor and giving them some useful content. You jut kind of shift your understanding a bit.

James Blatch: And it's a been a while since we recorded the interview with Erica and I didn't listen to it before we did this, but I will listen to it immediately afterwards to remind myself.

I can't remember exactly what we covered, but I think that's a very important point is you do sense from the tone of some people they feel almost apologetic for sending out an email and that's not the tone to have. You should be focused in your mind the persona you're emailing is the



person who wants to be on your list and wants to hear from you. Aim your emails at them.

And if people don't want to be on your list and don't want to hear from you, don't moderate yourself for them, 'cause they're going to leave anyway and there's no point in having them there.

Someone posted into the group, I think this morning or late last night saying, "Does anybody else feel down when people leave my list?"

Mark Dawson: I saw that.

James Blatch: And I think the answer to that is no. You shouldn't feel down when people leave your list. You should feel pleased.

Mark Dawson: I did when I started and you will when you start getting unsubscribes. It's just natural. I don't even check now. I looked, MailChimp, I still use MailChimp and they'll send me a daily update saying how many subscribed and unsubscribed.

When one of those emails goes out on a Friday, I'll probably have a hundred and fifty unsubscribes, which, if you think about it, it's like, 150 people hate my guts. Of course, that isn't why they've unsubscribed.

It could be any number of reasons why that is. But it doesn't bother me. I hardly notice these days. So, it isn't something that you need to worry about. It's just you don't really want them on your list if they don't want to be there. You're paying them to be there, so it makes much more sense for them to go.

Then of course your open rates, your engagement is likely to increase when you cut out the hated core people or deadwood, but it's kind of what they are, so just cut the deadwood out and concentrate on the ones who want to be there.

James Blatch: Yeah. We are deadwood on this. I unsubscribe from lists quite regularly. In fact, it makes me laugh every time I unsubscribe. I



unsubscribed from one this morning. How much time and effort and sweat we put into GDPR and how widely ignored it is by almost everybody in the world.

Mark Dawson: Yes, I know. That was another false stone, wasn't it?

James Blatch: It really was it was.

Mark Dawson: I've been unsubscribing to things. A lot of authors, naughty authors. Don't do this. Have been adding me to their lists without asking.

That's not a good idea, because I will unsubscribe and I will say I wasn't added to this list. It is not good for your sending reputation with your, the EMS. So, don't do things like that. It's a bit silly.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: Anyway. Here endeth the lesson.

James Blatch: There's a well-known English online entrepreneur. I'll hesitate to name him for this, but on his landing page he has a -

Mark Dawson: Is it J.B.? J.P.?

James Blatch: Yep. It is. And he has -

Mark Dawson: He's not that well known.

James Blatch: Well, he has an opt-in box for his mailing list and you can't go forward without ticking it. And it looks like it's an arrow. If you untick it, it looks like the screen goes into an arrow and you can no longer press collect, but the whole point of that opt-in was it made it a voluntary thing to join your list if you're going to have that.

But his if you want to go to his webinar, you've got to join his list, which is exactly what GDPR said is what you shouldn't be doing.



Mark Dawson: Yes. Absolutely. Not good.

James Blatch: Anyway. There you go.

And on emails we should say we did have a little blip ourselves for those of you on our list last week, because for some reason the email had a couple of erroneous links and banners in it and we're not sure exactly where that happened, but it happens to the best of us at some point. Every now and again. So, we try to make sure ... we keep the errors to an absolute minimum.

Mark Dawson: We usually keep John locked up in the basement.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: He must have escaped. Who knows?

James Blatch: I always liked Sky News when Sky News stated and rolling news looked very different from the considered bulletins that we had had for years and years and their motto was "Not Wrong for Long". So, if they're wrong, they corrected it quickly.

I want to say thank you so much to Erica Ridley for sitting down with us in John's bungalow in Florida last year. It was a brilliant chat to have with you Erica and I hope your books go well.

And we want to say thank you very much indeed for listening to the Self Publishing Show and Mark you and I will be back here to talk next week and ... who are we talking to next week? Can I preview this? I think it might be ... I don't know. I'm not going to preview it, because it's a state of flux at the moment in what's -

Mark Dawson: JK Rowling?

James Blatch: We haven't managed to bag J.K. yet.

Mark Dawson: Excuse me?



## PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

James Blatch: That's not an English euphemism. Get her in the bag.

Mark Dawson: Geez. Look at his face. It's getting worse. All right how about George R.R. Martin. Come on.

James Blatch: I would love to speak to George R.R. Martin, and if people have any contacts in these areas, they should work on our behalf and try and get them.

It would be great to have a proper sit down with these guys. A really big, hard profile writer. We'd love to do that. We should do that. 2019. One of our resolutions. Ina Broughton Let's get her on.

Mark Dawson: Good luck with that.

James Blatch: Yeah. Okay. Thank you so much indeed for listening. We will speak to you again next week. Bye-bye.

Mark Dawson: Bye-bye.

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