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Welcome to the right publish market podcast. If you're an entrepreneur considering writing a book to serve your business, you're in the right place. Or maybe you've already decided that's even better. I'm your host, Jodi Brandon, book publishing partner for entrepreneurs and 20 year veteran of the book publishing industry on the right publish market podcast. In addition to learning from me, you'll meet entrepreneurs just like you and hear about their experiences as we explore all facets of Writing, Publishing, and marketing a book that will help your business grow in ways you might not even have dreamed of yet. Our guest today is Mary Atkins, a writing coach and the founder of the book incubator, a 12 month program to write, revise and pitch your novel or memoir. She's the author of the novels when you read this, and Palm Beach. And her books have been published in 13 countries. And her essays and reporting have appeared in The New York Times The Atlantic, slate, and other publications. Mary is a graduate of the Yale Law School and Duke University, and she helps aspiring authors finish their books with joy and clarity. So welcome, Mary, I'm so happy to have you here today.

Hey, I'm so happy to be here. Thanks for inviting me. Absolutely.

I am fascinated by the Enneagram. And all of those sorts of like personality tests and tendencies and all of that. And I know you know way more about it than I do. So I'm so excited to dig in a little bit today with you about that, in general, I think that probably most people listening to this podcast, because they're business owners, I feel like they're ones and eights, but then I know, there's also a bunch of sevens. A lot of my clients have come back to me been like, No, I'm a seven. And I'm like, really? So can we sort of just maybe for people who aren't as familiar, just do sort of like a brief overview. I mean, obviously, I don't expect like a PhD level discussion here in this time period. But just a general overview of the Enneagram. And all that. Definitely.

Yeah. And also, by the way, there is a two question Enneagram test if people want to take an Enneagram test, but they don't want to spend 30 minutes doing it. You can Google to question Enneagram test, it'll come up. It's usually the one on red. It's the first link that I usually get, but that's the right one. And it will tell you what you probably are. But those tests are always like, they're like diagnostic, but they're they're really just meant to be a guide, because a lot of times people test wrong

even on the longer tests. But yeah, that's really interesting that you said one, sevens and eights, I would also guess, threes. I'm a three. And threes tend to be kind of ambitious. So it makes sense that business owners would also be threes to me, too. Yeah, no, you're right. So yeah. Okay, so you're the like, just a quick overview of the different numbers on the Enneagram. Yeah. Okay, so the Enneagram is a personality test that I'm fascinated by personality tests and have been for a long time. But this is the one that really resonated the most for me, and is actually had a pretty profound influence on my life in terms of how I understand myself, and, and my motivation, and what drives me and what blinders I have the Enneagram is, is categorized into nine different numbers, and everybody, you have one number, so sometimes people will say, like, I think I'm a couple of numbers, and you may identify with a couple, but the, the way that the test kind of officially works is like that doesn't really happen. Like you're really one primary number, and it's all about just what drives you more than anything else. And it's a motivation based test. So it's all about like, what's motivating you as a human being. Okay, so just to quickly go through the numbers, ones are sometimes called like the perfectionist or the reformer, they want everything to be right and good, that is what drives them. Number Two's want to be helpful more than anything, so that's like your friend who remembers your birthday and like, always get to a present, or make sure your favorite cake or so they want to be more than anything, they want to be helpful. And this is really I also like to think of this as how we find our value in the world. Like even if we're not consciously doing it. In fact, I think a lot of us are subconsciously doing it but like where we're why we think we're valuable to the world why we think we matter and have worth like it's an ego thing. So then threes find their value through and like I said, I'm a three through work and accomplishment and achievement, usually, so that's why I think I wouldn't be surprised if like a lot of entrepreneurs are threes as well.

I think so I think you're right

yeah, and they're the three is sometimes called the the achiever but also sometimes the performer because threes can also be like we develop a persona that sometimes we like mistake for ourselves like we even get confused about what our authentic identity Okay, which is interesting. Fours is for sometimes called the artist or the individualist and that is someone who really wants more than anything to be unique to be different, not be just another like run of the mill person who's a stereotype. Five is like is called the researcher sometimes and this is the classic the kind of caricature of it would be the absent I need a professor. This is like someone who loves research is scholarly, like can't get enough information that they want to learn as much as possible about something they want. There's always more to learn. And that's the the five, six is sometimes called the loyalists, because they're really loyal to their their friends and family. They're sick. I mean, it's like ride or do your ride or die person. But the thing that drives this six is catastrophe planning. So this is someone who's looking to the future, always imagining kind of the worst case scenario. Okay, planning for it in their mind. And there's one thing that's really interesting about the Enneagram to me is when you hear other numbers, you think, what are their people like that? Like, when I hear six, I'm like, what are their people like that? But the people who are like that, hear that and go, Oh, my God, that is me.

Anybody who's a six? I don't know. But yeah, I'm sure that the people are.

No, yeah. Like my, one of my best friends is and my brother in law's and when they heard that description, they were like, Whoa, that is because even if they're not talking about it, their catastrophe plan, like in their head there. Yeah. Scenario, and you may not know that about them, but that's what they're doing. Yeah. And then seven, it doesn't really surprise me that you said a lot of people are sevens who are good because they seven is that's like the life of the party. This is the fun person who's always like, willing to try something new that yeah, seven is like a really bold number on the Enneagram, who's like up for anything, like, give that a shot and see what happens. So that Yeah, the thing that drives the seven is really, it's like pleasure and adventure and newness. The thing that drives the eight is power. My husband is an eight, an eight want to amass power. They and they can use it for good or evil. Like I think eight, eight isn't my number on the Enneagram I'm really fascinated by a lot of like leaders, including like tyrants, and dictators, like the bad leaders are eights, but also the good leaders. And so I think it's a really interesting number. But it does tend to be someone with a lot of ambition, but they're not driven by appearance. Like they don't really care what you think of them. They just want to have actual power. It's for them. Yeah, yeah. And then nine, the final number is the peacemaker. And this is someone who, above all else just wants things to be harmonious wants people to get along. This is like the person in your life who will always mediate the conflict, they would never, they would almost never bring up the conflict, because that would give them like a stomach ulcer. They they just want everyone to feel at peace more than anything. And like I said, Everybody may, you may think, Well, I'm like five of those, like five of those things I kind of identify with, but it's really the there's one that's going to drive you more than anything. For example, I am pretty conflict averse. But that's not what drives me in life, my primary driver in life is not to avoid conflict. I just prefer to avoid conflict, right. But the thing that's actually driving me is I find value through my work and achievement. If that makes sense.

It makes perfect sense. No, that overview was super helpful. I think the important thing is like you're saying, like, it's more like understanding that tendencies, and what's driving you and then learning how to use that in your life and

your work. Yeah, yeah, exactly.

And I think that's really important for, I mean, whatever your craft is going to be, but when you're, you know, doing something like most of the people listening to this podcast, are not trying to be a professional writer. Now there are those with those I find especially perfectionist tendencies who have trouble then making that mindset shift to letting themselves be like, Okay, this book is just, it's a marketing tool for a business, it doesn't have to be the next great American novel. Like they really those two things are in a lot of conflict for them. But I think yeah, as you decide, okay, I'm going to write a book to serve my business to use as a marketing tool, you're adding that to an already full plate so I think understanding these tendencies and what you know might come up for you as resistance along

the way can be super as you were going through them I was sort of like ticking off in my mind. You know, like number five I'm working with someone right now who is for sure a number five can love research and the learning and has been working on their book for a long time because we cannot get out of the research phase. And I keep saying okay, let's move forward and you know, learn something else or do a little more research later on. Let's but in the meantime, let's move forward and they are literally unable to do so. I was thinking about that person is you going through. And then the number seven those who are, you know up for anything, the adventure. Those are now that I'm looking back those people who, you know stop and start because you they've lost interest in interest in a long term project like a book all that to say I have found, I have found all this to be true. So I guess the next thing I would like as like to kind of shift into is what how do we use that as we're, as we're thinking about a project like writing? What are the sorts of things that we need to keep in mind as we're setting? You know, like writing goals, for example?

Yeah, okay, I love talking about this. So the first thing I would do for someone who's new to the Enneagram, and wants to understand it better to under weather for life, or for business, or for writing a book would be to go to the Enneagram Institute website, it's just called the Enneagram Institute. And they have a really user friendly page, you just click on type descriptions, and you click on the type that you've identified as through testing, or just reading about them. And, and ultimately, that's how you figure out your type. It's just what you identify with, like, only you can know what you are. But if you read about it, it'll break down like what are what are some of your basic fears? What are some of your basic desires, what are the kinds of things that get in your way, and I find even just reading through that, and seeing what resonates can be kind of intense, in a good way. Like, it can just help you see, like, see aspects of yourself and some of the resistance that you're facing. And just to articulate it in a way that you haven't before. So that's the first thing I just I suggest that people do just go there and read about it on your type, and see what see what makes sense. And then, you know, think about it, or journal about it or whatever, right. But the other thing too, is like you were just saying, when you know what drives you, it can also help you figure out some of the kinds of things that you're going to get in your way. So for example, when we're talking about goal setting for writing a book, I realized a couple of years ago, when I started working with writers on books that they like word count doesn't work for everyone. Yeah. And then when I started to the when I got acquainted with the Enneagram, I wonder, like, I wonder how gold types overlay Enneagram types, like, for example, when I say gold types, I mean, like, you don't have to use word count, you could use page count, or you could just write a scene a day. Or you could, you could also, I mean, this gets into how you're even writing your book, you could dictate into your phone, and you could just dictate for 10 minutes today, you could like there are so many ways to get writing down. And I wondered how those worked with Enneagram types. And so I just started doing both just some kind of guesswork on my own, like making hypotheses based on my understanding of the Enneagram and the different types. But then also talking to people that I was new or was working with, about how the different types would approach writing a book and what they thought what either was their struggle or what they thought would be their biggest struggle. I mean, it was interesting to like my I asked, my husband's not a writer, but he is an eighth and I asked him, Okay, if you were going to write a book, what do you think would be your biggest challenge? He sees me write books every day. So like, he knows, I mean, he's, he least is a witness to it. Right? And it was funny that his answer was he's like, Well, I mean, I wouldn't even write it, I would just hire someone to write it for me. Like, it

doesn't seem efficient enough for me to try to write. I thought, oh, that's, that's like, in some ways, like not a surprising answer from an eight. Like, it's very practical, you know, it's like, let's just make whatever decision is going to make the most sense. I don't need to write this thing. Unless it's actually going to be the best use of my time. I love that. Yeah. But for you, okay, so for example, with word count, like the one Okay, ones I mentioned, that's kind of the perfectionist, they want to be right, they want to do good, they want to do the right thing. And so they tend to beat like, if someone is really really a perfectionist, then they may be a one. Now, word count may not work for a one because if a word count decides they're going to write 1500 words a day, they're going to be so attached to that exact number. Yes, that it might become a problem like right like it may stress them out and may like infringe on other parts of their like it it may not allow them enough flexibility to actually just write when they are inspired to write like have some kind of rhythm but have some flexibility around it just in the way that you know it's like amenable to having a good life. But a word count could work really well for another number that's not so attached to details. So things like that. I mean, the and we could get into like all the specifics to the one goal type that through my work totally isn't talking to writers doing some research into this the one goal type that seems to work for every single Enneagram number. I was so excited when I found this is Sprint's doing sprint yeah Like, sprint seems to kind of cut through just all of our hang ups, no matter who we are. So by sprint, I mean setting a timer for like 20 or 25 minutes or doing it with other people where you're all doing it for 2025 minutes. short sprint, I'm not talking like a lot. I mean, that's a sprint, right? Like, you're not talking about a marathon, right? So a short sprint where you're just writing as much as you can in that amount of time. And that seems to just like really unlock stuff across the board. So that was really cool to figure out.

That's interesting, because I bet the reason why is different for each of the numbers, but yet it works for

that's interesting. Exactly. Yeah. Like, it just, it's almost like that little tight container. Is it's so tight, that whatever your hang up is you kind of have no choice, but just to ignore it. If you're gonna get any writing done. I don't know if that's it, but that's, yeah, that maybe that's why

Yeah, no, got to do what you got to do. I love it. Yeah, yeah, exactly. I feel like the phrase I hear most often from one's when it comes to, you know, word count and the writing schedule and all that is, you know, but I'm supposed to, like if I had a nickel for every time a client said to me, or I said as because I'm a one like, but I'm supposed.

Yeah, I meant to ask. Okay.

Yeah, although you're making the question. And I have to say like, as I like, I've never heard such a succinct overview of all the numbers in my life, like, Oh, good, but I think I mean, I'm, I'm pretty sure on the ones. I think I want to be in a different number, but I'm a one.

Yes. I really wanted to be a seven and I'm not. Sevens just seems so fun.

But yes, one of my great friends is a seven and I feel the same way. Yeah. Every time they have an idea. I'm like, Oh, that's a great idea. I wish I wish I could be okay with that.

Yeah, I know. And your friends who are sevens are like, like, my friend who's a seven is so fun. Like, she wants to do something new. And I'm like, why can't I be so fun? Like you?

Yeah, but then the flip side of that is they're saying to me, you know, why can't I get everything done? Like you do? Well, yeah. praise my friend. The anxiety it comes with as a price. Oh, that's fun. Yeah. Now, what do you think? How would we flip that at all? If we would marry when we're talking about book marketing goals versus book writing goals? I'm thinking, I guess, sort of like the, like, the intersection of, you know, sort of, like the Enneagram tendencies versus you know, like, more like, I guess, like straight personality type. You know, like, when you think about book marketing for like, introverts versus extroverts, like, what works for one doesn't work for another?

Yeah, that's cool. Because when I think about how that Enneagram can be most effective in marketing, the thing that actually strikes me as having the most potential, and I've thought about doing this before, but I've never actually done it for business owners is to tailor your marketing to your most common Enneagram type of client. Right? So like, that makes sense. So like, I have a lot of fours, who I work with, because I mainly teach fiction writing. So I have a lot of people who have fiction ideas, and often that's going to be a four, definitely have some sevens. Have some threes. So and then some of the other numbers, but like, yeah, if I were to say, Okay, I think my most popular client numbers of is a four, then I could read up on some of the language that fours use to describe themselves and like, use that in my marketing. Oh, I love that. Yeah, I think that I like I said, I haven't done that. But I think it's a good idea. That's

super smart idea. Yeah. That makes perfect sense, though. Because, yeah, like, what a way to connect with those people. That's,

and and because the Enneagram is so much about motivation. Yes, that when we're marketing, I mean, we're, we're trying to connect with a consumer in terms of like, what they want next, right, like, what they want to happen. We're really trying to tap into that motivation. And so I just think it could be really helpful. It would definitely take some current research to figure out like, what is your predominant and you grab salutely? With? Yeah, for sure. But

that's, I mean, that's similar to that, you know, like that sweet spot. When business owners are trying to identify their goals for their book, they're looking for that sweet spot between what they want the book to do and what the audience needs from them. And that sweet spot is, is it so it's a similar kind of exercise? You know, how do they want to market and put themselves out there, and what is their audience wanting to be most receptive to and that middle spot, that sweet spot? I mean, that's yeah, that's, I feel like, yeah, you're blowing my mind. Yeah. Well, and I love that you, like you keep like reiterating that point that it's about motivations it's not yeah you know like right or wrong like this it just it kind of is what it is and it's about how we're each internally or externally motivated. It's Oh my gosh, it's so interesting.

Yeah, and I think that's really important. I mean, I worked with an Enneagram coach for a while and this is what she would say to me because I keep stressing the motivation because she would have to I would I would make it about behavior. I'd be like, Well, what a three do this and she would be like, it's not about behavior, any of the numbers could do any, like any number could be a narcissist. Any number could be a bank robber, or a teacher or like a kindly grandma, but like, it's about what's driving that behavior, not the behavior itself. Yeah. And that's why only you know what your number is, because only you really know what's driving you. Other people can observe and make guesses, but then only you know where that's coming from.

That's such an interesting point, because I did that for the longest time. And I think I still do that. Sometimes when I'm thinking about the Enneagram is focusing on the behavior. Not Yeah, the motivation made really easy to do. Yeah, yeah. When you're working with clients. Now, I'm just sort of having like my own little like therapy session, here on the podcast. But do you? How much of that do you talk about with your clients? Like, as a book coach? Like? Do you ask them what their Enneagram number is? And is that come into play at all? In your coach, I

make them take the test. Yeah. Yeah, we integrated like, I make them take the test. I mean, not make I encouraged. And then talk to them about, okay, like, based on your number here, some writing goals that could work better or worse for you. But only you're going to know that but like, I'm trying to bring awareness to Okay, here are the different types of writing goals. Here is your personality type in this one personality assessment? Here is some stuff to think about. So that you can find we're basically just using the Enneagram as a tool to find a way that they can feel motivated to get it done. Yes. Because first draft is just like trying to get it done. And so many, like you said, so many people have impostor syndrome. I mean, yes. Like, I even I mean, you were saying you work with people. And it's like, you have to remind them, they're not trying to write the great American novel. Like, I even have to remind myself of that, even though I am trying to write. Like, yes, it's really hard not to get hung up on like, Am I smart enough? Am I good enough? Am I gonna embarrass myself is this stupid is like, just all of those thoughts. And so I feel like writing goals, I kind of think of writing goals as a way of navigating around those thoughts that we all have, or most of us have, at least. Yeah. And so if you find the right goal, if you find the wrong goal, it just doesn't help. Like you're now you have the wrong goal. And you have all those feelings, and it just starts to feel overwhelming. Yeah. But if you if you realize like, Oh, I could just

write a scene a day, that just sounds so manageable, then yeah, it can be you can spend your energy fighting those impostor syndrome feelings, and then just show up and do the work in spite of them. Because they don't really go away. Right. But you're not also fighting a goal type that just doesn't work with who you are.

Yeah, that moment of clarity, whatever it is, whether it's about you know, like the word count, or writing a scene, or whatever the case may be, when it comes to book writing it that moment of clarity is so great. Like it just, I feel like it just like busts the whole project open for somebody. Yeah. You know, and then it just, it's, again, it's writing an entire book. So it's not easy, but it's easier.

Yeah, it doesn't have to be like pulling a big suitcase uphill. Right. But yeah,

I remind I feel like I'm constantly having to remind clients like we're choosing to do this. So let's let's make it a surprise.

Yeah, yes. I love that attitude. Like this is not necessary for survival, which makes it a choice. So let's just try to make it as fun as possible. Yeah, I'm,

you know, yeah, that's sort of my oh my gosh, this conversation has been so great. This IV took a couple of different turns that I was expecting, but like in the best way possible. This was I feel like we could talk about this. So great.

Me too. I loved it.

I don't does you know what anybody leaves the podcast without giving me a book recommendation.

It may be a little controversial, but I am loving Prince Harry's memoir.

I feel so good. Are you? Are You Reading it or listening to it?

I'm reading it. Okay, it has taken me. I am like a week into reading this book every night. It's so long, okay. And as some people have said, there is a little bit of like, I've read some criticisms, like on social media saying like, Oh, there's some of this, some of this detail could have been left out, like about the high school years or the military years. And I would agree with that. I think we get into a lot of military

detail that lost my interest of it. But in general, it's just very juicy. And dishy and I and it's his ghost writers. Fantastic. Like the writing itself is really good. So I'm loving it.

Okay. You're the first person I've heard say that the writing is fantastic. Really? Imagine people are just saying that to me, because they know that I care about that. But yes, no, I have heard that also. But I have quite a few friends who are listening to it to the audiobook version. And I'm wondering like how I feel like that's always the case with a memoir. Like, how does that change?

How does it compare? Yeah. Does he read his audio version? I believe so. Okay, that makes sense. Yeah, that'd be fine. It'd be fun to hear him read it. I think

I would be disappointed if he wasn't reading it. Yeah. I have to assume that. Yeah. That especially I think, like, given some of his like, publicity goals. I would say it would be silly for him to not be the narrator of it. Okay. That is a good recommendation. I feel like no matter which side of the like the story you're on, they're like whose side you're on. I feel like this book is a good read. Oh, it's

a good read. Okay, I actually Googled and I've never done this i i found out who the ghostwriter was in Googled him because I was so I was so impressed with the writing. Okay, all right. The way that he ends the sections it's so artfully done like the little for the foreshadowing and the kind of the motifs like he just okay and you know, that's him like that's in the writing I did that yeah, it's just I think it's a good almost to the point that I was like, Should I turn this into a writing less than in my program because they're just so many good things? I think I think it's a good read for people who are interested in good writing.

Okay, that is you've sold me on moving it up my TBR pile yay. Sure. I'm not a huge like royal like watcher royal buff any of that. But I am like, fascinated by this Prince Harry Megan Markel principle. Yeah. And Catherine like, it's, I don't understand what's going on. I don't think I follow it closely enough to really understand but I'm like, on the outskirts like looking and fascinated. So

yeah, okay, I am too. I was not like a royal person until all of that's until the whole mechanism carry things started happening. But it's really captivated me.

Now, okay, well, I'm gonna read it, and then circle back with you, so we can talk about Thank you, Mary. This was such a fun conversation. I appreciate the book recommendation also. And we're gonna put all of the like the two question tests that you mentioned, and all of those resources, we'll throw those in the show notes with your information and website and all that so readers can or listeners, readers,

listeners, can follow up and learn more about you. This was so fun. Thank you so so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

It was so fun. Thanks again.

Thanks for listening to today's episode of the right published market podcast. I know just how busy your schedule is as a business owner, so I'm grateful you've taken some time out of yours to journey into the world of book publishing with me today. If you are looking for even more book writing, marketing and publishing information and support, check out my mentorship membership at the author entrepreneurs lab where each month we take a deep dive into one element of the book world with education, a q&a session with me your book publishing expert resources, co writing times and so much more. You can learn more at the link in the show notes. I hope to see you inside the lab.