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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. My guest today is one of my favorite book publishing friends and we are so lucky to have her. Let me tell you a little bit about her. Susan Clark is a German native born and raised in Germany, but she's been living on the east coast in the Baltimore, Washington DC area for more than 20 years. Suzy studied graphic design at the University of Maryland and worked as a graphic designer for a financial and book publishing company for more than a decade. There, she took on many responsibilities and worked her way up to lead a team of designers. As the art director, she learned all about marketing strategies, publishing and the design business. While working on her professional career. She has also nurtured a freelancing design business, creating long lasting relationships with clients in 2019, she started her full time design company, creative blueprint design. Now she can dedicate her time to helping a range of clients, from individuals to small businesses, and even corporate companies that operate world wide. And we again are so lucky to have her today. Suze, welcome. I'm so happy to have you today.

01:41

Thanks, Jody, I'm really happy to be here.

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I am excited to talk to you. Most especially because the publishing piece is not one that we talk about a lot on the podcast. Like we talk a lot about the writing piece, we talk a lot about the marketing piece, but then that like middle ground publishing piece of the puzzle, which I think is I mean, it's so important, because it's really like where somebody becomes an author, I think like it's where the book goes from, like a Google Doc or a Microsoft Word document to actually being a book. And that's the best. I mean, like, that's the coolest part. Right? And that's like, sort of your area of expertise. So I'm excited to dig into this a little bit with you today.

02:22

Yeah, absolutely. No, you're right. That is the part the point where it really all shifts and becomes real, like now it's real, like, so yes, it's a very important point. But it's also the last part, the most exciting part. So yes, I absolutely agree with you.

02:37

Let's talk a little bit about like, the nitty gritty, because I think that even though it might not be as like, as exciting to learn about, like, that's the important part for authors to understand like that, you know, different formats have different file formats, like like paperback audiobook, all that. I mean, they have different file formats. And there's a lot to keep track of, and I know that you do a lot of different things for authors. So I think actually, let me let me step back. Let's start there. So there's interior typesetting,

cover design, but then also that like uploading publishing piece, and I know you do all three of those, but not every designer does. And I have to imagine it's a smoother process. If one person is doing all three of them, is that fair? Or not so much.

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I think that's a very fair statement, because now you will, you're working with someone that is already looking ahead that understands whatever we're working on, on the cover design, interior, the ebook, whatever it is, like that designer also understands what the specific publishing platforms can actually do, what dimensions they need, what it takes to upload what they actually support. So not every publishing platform has hardcovers or dust jackets or specific sizes. So I think working with someone that does all all of those things. They should from the beginning, I mean, any designer should from the beginning, start talking about the end, you know, the end station, the end phase, as well and be Orion. What is actually doable and not just designed blindly. And then we get to someone that helps with the upload, or the authors a lot of times do that themselves. And then they're like, oh, no, these files don't actually work. Or why is this not working? And so having someone that understands the entire process, I think it's super, super helpful and also takes a lot of those worries away. And that person is so in this case, me I can already advise a lot of things along the way guide along you know, like, yes, you want this but if you want to publish on, let's say Amazon KDP or Ingram Spark, you have different options. And so I can help them think through that before we even start the full design and not run into a scenario where we have to start over again. I think that's what we definitely want to avoid. So having someone that does all three are some That's completely aware that you should think ahead is very important. Yeah,

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I think this is the piece that any client that I have done just copy editing for. This is what they always come back to me asking, like, they'll try to do it themselves. They'll get the book designed, and they'll come try to do the uploading and publishing piece themselves. And then they come back to me and say, I think I've screwed this up. What do I do? And that's, that's something that I deal with. So. So I think that you're right, that this definitely happens a lot. And I think this is the where really avoiding that overwhelm, especially as they're so clear, because at that point, they're so close. And they've probably announced that the book is coming. And now it's just like this absolute pan, I'm sure you get those same kinds of things from people that you haven't done the interior or cover for, or they come to you after the fact that they're like, please help me fix this.

05:57

Oh, absolutely. I just had someone that like now, like, had to cancel all of his events. He had all these events scheduled for April. And now they're all they all need to be rescheduled four months later, because now everything needs to be started over. And that's like the last thing the author wants to hear, like, like you said, I'm so excited at this point. Like, I mean, I It's really, really hard for me to even like schedule people at that point that we're done with the interior with that with the cover. Yeah, like, you know, my schedule says, okay, in a week or two, we can schedule publishing, and the authors are so excited that point. So we'll do it this week. Oh, you already told everyone on your social media that right? I get on it. So like, I can do that, knowing that will have the right files and everything. But like you

said, sometimes, you know, then you run into like, oh, no, you know, someone doesn't have the right file. Someone didn't think about that. So now what yeah, it means you don't want to kill that.

06:56

Right. So Well, I think that's the danger to have. I mean, especially with self publishing is that a lot of people try and DIY or, like pieces of it DIY without really having, you know, that education piece. And yeah, I mean, I, you probably have 1000s of horror stories like that, I would imagine. Okay, so now let's get into some of that, like nitty gritty like you were talking about file types and cover dimensions and things like that, like, what are the some of the things that that authors need to be thinking about? When they're thinking about, you know, design and hiring a designer? And then that publishing piece, like just some of the things that they need to be thinking about? Like, I mean, I bet there are people listening right now who don't even know that there are different file types for different types of books, book formats.

07:47

Yeah, absolutely. So for example, where do I start so far? Okay, started somewhere. If you want to go through Amazon KDP, you have paperbacks, like lots of choices for that. And then you only have a very limited size, like physical size choices for printed hardcover bound books. So you want to make sure that if you have, if you really want to do a hardcover bound book, that and you want to publish through Amazon KDP, that they actually have that size. And then if you also want to publish through Ingram Spark, because you can do both want to make sure that they both have that size, or if KDP doesn't, and you have a completely different size in mind, you might want to look at Ingram Spark, because they might support that. So that's one thing or if you really want to dustjacket, Amazon KDP doesn't have that. So you do have to go to Ingram Spark, but then not every size supports that. So you really want to think about those things ahead of time when especially when it comes to hardcover bound books. Another thing you want to think about is the number of pages, they don't just print 1000 pages, you need to know what is your maximum page size. And then another thing that I think is really important, bringing the publishing piece and the design piece together, something that should be talked about ahead of time, is the colors on the inside. So for example, if you want to do a regular novel, most of them have just black and white, like Black Writing on the inside, I'm going to keep it very simple not to. But then there are other books where people would like to have images on them on the interior. And a lot of times I just get sent a lot of colorful pictures, oh my god, this is great, or some charts or graphics that have colors in them. And then I'm like, Well, do you know what it does to your royalties and how much it changes your print price per book, if you have any, like even a.of color in Europe, that changes everything. So making authors aware. What that does to your you know, to your royalty at the end of the day is super important before you get started because it is a huge shift, and also the options that are available between the papers. So I think those are some of the things that authors should be aware of also that they can't do spiral bound with the traditional publishers like Amazon KDP, or Ingram Spark, and then also a difference between ebooks and paperbacks, just having that conversation because you don't want to lose that piece in the conversation like, do they want an actual printed physical book? Or do they just want an ebook? And that conversation is really important, or do they want both. And in some cases, I think for certain workbooks or journals, or coffee table books, an e book might not actually be very, the best solution, you might actually want it on your print sales with that, and it might not be as applicable, like to do things, you know, in an ebook, and actually EPUB. So I always have

tried to have that conversation ahead of time, if they really need that. Even though ebooks can give you higher royalty percentages, can I'm saying Can they. But that's that to consider. And I know, I'm like jumping a little bit back and forth between print and ebook. So it's always important to make those distinctions and really do that. And then another thing, you mentioned formats and files and all those fun things, you really want to work with someone that understands the right type of files that I needed for the upload, because I've had so many times where someone had a cover design designed somewhere on a on a website that I don't want to name but you know, those websites out there, where you get things a little bit cheaper. And then they come to me. And let's say I was just going to do the interior. And they come to me and already have the entire cover done, like spine back cover everything and it looks beautiful. But I'm like, how did they know that your spine is going to be one inch thick, I'm actually thinking it's just going to be half an inch thick, you cannot determine your spine until the entire interior is completed. So now they have this design. And oftentimes, and I've been in a situation like this, where they didn't have access to that designer anymore, or they only had those files, and it costs them so much money for me to redo it or change. And so you always want to work on the front cover first and wait for your interior designer to be done. And then do the spine and the back cover, which is also good reason to have one designer follow those things. Yes, as long as you have access to all all your people, that's fine, too. But it's definitely something you need to be mindful of, and as an author to not just see like your end result be like, Oh, this is great. But does it actually work for the final step of publishing? So that's something they need? Yeah. Also the copyright laws, the color space, you know, like, you have to have the file in the right, right cover space, the right resolution. So yeah, yeah, not everyone truly thinks about that, or knows that. And I know for authors, that's so overwhelming, that's definitely not something they really want to be concerned with, or think about. So as a designer, and someone that understands publishing, and printing also, those are things that should be talked about, and definitely work through

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it. Yeah, I think those are the places where if this is one of those, you know, you don't know what you don't know. And then you get yourself into a situation where, you know, like, that author probably thought like, oh, no, I'll get the cover done ahead of time. I'll be ahead of the game. That's gonna be great. But yeah, I mean, and I think I think covers are confusing, because we throw around the term cover when we really just mean front cover, like you're saying, there's also the spine and the back cover that. But yeah, this I mean, of course, all of it makes perfect sense. If you sit back and think about it like, Oh, yes, of course, it makes sense that I don't have any idea how wide the spine needs to be until the page count is finalized. Yeah. But like, you know, when you don't know, you're just yeah, just your first book. And you know, you're trying to figure it all out. You're like, oh, yeah, no, that's great. Cover check. And then not so much when you can come back to it. But I yeah, I think that there's so much when it comes to the publishing piece that people just don't they don't even realize, can we just like for the sake of everybody that maybe doesn't know, like to talk a little bit about like, what is KDP? What is Ingram Spark? And why are they the two that people like you and me talk about the most?

14:20

Yeah, no, absolutely. So KDP is created directly from Amazon. And it's a publishing platform that allows self publishing authors to create their own account, and upload the book, the interior, the cover and everything, or the epub and then uploaded to their account to this and it goes directly to Amazon from

there. So it automatically publishes through there, and you will see your book on Amazon. So it's like the easiest way to get your book onto Amazon, which is amazing that they make that available to anyone. And they also print books, which a lot of authors actually don't realize they think it's on Amazon like who prints it down. No, I Amazon KDP also prints those books. And you can do one at a time, which means that the print on demand platform, which is so amazing. And then on the other side, we have Ingram Spark that we talked about so much. And they are more of a distributor. So they also print books, you also upload your files to this platform, but then they send it to a whole bunch of bookstores. So that actually includes Amazon, Amazon is one of their partners that they distribute to. So now you can either go directly through Amazon KDP, the, you know, the actual website to get your book onto Amazon. But you can also go through Ingram Spark and put your book there, and it will also appear on Amazon. And then it will also appear on Barnes and Nobles, books, a million targeted Walmart, all these other places, which gives you this amazing reach, which is awesome. And the best part about that is that libraries and small bookstores, they can order now through the Ingram Spark catalog. So they can your local bookstores can now actually get into that catalog and order your book, which is amazing. So that's a huge benefit of Ingram Spark, you can do something similar with the expanded distribution on KDP, as well. But from everything I've learned Ingram Spark does really do a better job at spreading your book wide. But I would always recommend actually going with both, because there's a lot of benefits with that as well. For example, your book will never show out of stock on Amazon, which Yeah, with Ingram Spark, they do this sometimes it's super. So there's perks going with both. And then there's also some cons where KDP is just such an easy platform to navigate. And Ingram Spark is so much bigger, and there's just so many terms that are extremely overwhelming. So not everyone has to do both. Not everyone needs to have that huge distribution. So that's another thing to talk about. But then Ingram Spark does offer more sizes and more format. It's yeah, it's something that should be talked about. But hopefully that gives a little bit often. Oh, no,

17:09

that's that's a really helpful explanation kind of lay of the land. Well, and I think a lot of people were doing both that seemed to be the sweet spot before KDP was offering hardcovers I mean, that's sort of a new thing for them. So I haven't noticed, like a big shift yet. But like I said, I'm not typically involved and like that part of the process is Do you think that's, do you think people will still do both? Now that KDP is offering our cover? Or do you think it's too soon? To tell? Really,

17:38

I think it really depends on each individual authors and marketing plan. If they have a really good marketing plan, they might not need both. They could just get away with KDP. But in either situation, I feel like it's tough. It's a tricky one. I do see some people just going to Amazon now. But there's just I don't know, it's a tricky one. I think there's Yeah,

18:02

I think it really does depend on what the specific author is trying to do. Yeah. Okay. Speaking of marketing, I know pre orders are something that you work with your clients on. So can you talk a little bit about pre orders? Like, are there times when it makes sense to not do a pre order versus or a type of book where Oh, you have to do a pre order? And then, like how to the logistics of a preorder situation work?

18:30

Yeah, no, that's a great question. So it's very marketing dependent, of course, whether you really need a pre order pre sale setup or not, I think there's a huge benefit to that where you can collect orders already leading up to your launch day. And I think on the best seller list, it actually then helps your ranking because they all then count towards that day. And you also actually ranking before already, which is kind of funny. So you'll see the button on Amazon to say pre sale. And you can, of course already ordered, but you're not going to get the book yet. But then you see in the product description that you're already ranking, which is kind of fun. But I think that's a great method for a lot of authors that want to build the hype and already collect orders and they have a really long marketing plan. And you can only so this is where it gets a little tricky. With KDP you cannot set up pre sales for your print books. You can only do that for your ebooks. Ingram Spark you can set it up for both and that's where Ingram Spark also that's a huge benefit with them for a lot of authors that do want that building that excitement that want that presale button. So you kind of have to go through Ingram Spark to get that, that I'm kind of not sure why KDP is not doing that yet, or why they're not offering it. But um, yeah, like we did.

19:55

I thought it would have happened by now.

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Yeah, I mean the catching and doing the hardcover books now. That's right. Yeah, that's true. But that I really wish they would do that, because that's a big reason why I then also have to guide authors through Ingram Spark because we really want that presale button. On the other hand, I have seen some authors have some really big success, not having it like they would just really tell their audience like that's a day, that's a day. And then we just press the button basically that day or so with KDP. The thing is, once you publish your book, you press that button, you put all your files in your account, you press that publishing button, that doesn't mean the book goes live right away. So now you have a 72 hour window that they say yes, timeframe, it will be live. So you don't really know. Is it coming out today? Is it coming out tomorrow? Is it coming out? After? Right? That's a little tricky. And in that case, you really just have to hover around your emails and wait for

20:55

that announcement that yeah, you're at their mercy. It's been I've

20:59

had authors that did exactly that. And then they would just tell their audience, like it's gonna come out in the next couple of days, like, Yeah, I'll let you know, you'll be the first to know. So you can still build excitement that way as well. Yeah, if you're just good at communicating, and if your audience is good at receiving funding to the website, or to Amazon to get it. So that's something to definitely consider.

21:26

I've had that like upload where it says, you know, now, it'll be up to 72 hours, I've had it get approved in like an hour. And then I've had it take like four or five days like past the window. And it's just like, what is

there's like, I mean, I'm sure that there is, but it seems like there's no rhyme or reason. And it's so frustrating.

21:45

Oh, yeah. For example, ePubs, they go so quickly, within on KDP. On Ingram Spark different story, print books, same thing, they could go within a couple of hours, and a lot of them do go through within those three days, some Ingram Spark completely different story, you have at least five days or something right now. But then with KDP, you could also what could also happen is that everything looks great, you get this print preview, you know, you have to prove that, yeah, and everything seems great. But every once in a while the people in the background actually don't approve everything. So now, two or three days later, you get this message, oh, you need to fix something, a lot of times what happens that the cover design, or there is so either it's the cover design that there's, for example, some imagery in the background, that doesn't fully extend to the edges. So it's extended extend past it, which is called the bleed blue pile has bleeds, but let's say there's a house that's really tied to those edges, like the, you know, the sideline of the house, they don't really like that. So then they might actually come back and like, we'll say, your house or your butterfly or whatever it is, needs to actually get bigger, only go one way or the other. So they've done that when you think everything is fine, they actually do stop everything. And then you have to fix those issues or in your interior margins aren't right to their specifications or something like that. So it does happen. So it's not a given that it is within those 72 hours, like you're saying, right? And then also workbooks and journals they just take so much longer, longer always take longer, and especially around the holidays.

23:31

Yeah, I say anytime I tell my clients just anytime after October 1, assume it's going to take longer. Oh yeah, the closer you get to the holidays, the longer lead time you're going to, you should allow. I mean, I'm just imagining myself as a non techie person. Like if I got that email from Amazon back saying like that there was something wrong with like an image on the cover, and I had to fix it, I would have no idea what to do.

24:00

And you're so right about that. And that's actually part of my package is to help authors translate what is like I will tell them just forward me your email. Yeah, laid out I'll be there. And if we're working with another cover designer or someone else that is involved, I will translate to them as well. And I'll make sure we get the right files back and then we'll do it again. So yeah, those things happen and yeah, I always like being there because I understand like after emails from authors like what does this mean? Why do I

24:32

Yeah, yeah, you must get again a million of those kinds of you will I mean, yeah, I feel like you're like the Amazon whisperer. Like everybody needs on their publishing team.

24:42

Oh my gosh, I I just had this case where someone's and I've seen it now multiple times with Ingram Spark but they don't upload the cover to Amazon so on that the previous just not there. And now you

have your your sales funnel built and you have your proof sale button, but your cover doesn't show up. Oh my gosh. And Ingram Spark, one of the cons of Ingram Spark is their customer service. It's just non-existent almost. It's just so bad. And KDP has amazing customer service. And but if you want that pre-sale button for your print book and you going through Ingram Spark, then you are at the mercy of that. So it's Yeah, yeah, I'm definitely in your corner. And I've had the scenario with an author, we really went through so many channels to try to make this cover show. Couple days prior, finally, but it took a long time, because you want to be respectful. You know, they say, Oh, it takes up to 30 days. So can you just wait? Okay, cool. 30 days are over. Now. What?

25:45

Right? Yeah, 130 days is a long time. I mean, I mean, yeah, like, yeah, so Well, I mean, and again, like how is like the average business owner writing a book, or the average author in general, like, they're not gonna, they, they're not learning all of this stuff about the publishing piece. Like, they're just, it doesn't make sense for them to unless they're planning to be a professional writer, and they're gonna do it 500 times, you know, there's but ya know, they need they need Suzy, the Amazon whisperer.

26:14

Well, then also you have people that are a little bit older, that are not very tech savvy, that don't even want to deal with any of that I actually had a client, he didn't have a smartphone yet. And to be able to log into your Amazon account, they will send you a code and he wasn't Oh, you have to accept something to get in right? Phone. So he wasn't able to do that. He actually ended up ordering a smartphone just to do this. Oh, my God. There's ways around it. There are ways around that, actually. But it was so sweet. And I completely understand for him, it was one of those thoughts. I'm just going to make it easy on myself. I'll just watch. But as far as the publishing platforms, yeah, that's something like not everyone needs to know and needs or needs to worry about. So

27:03

absolutely. Like us know, I'm a big believer in like staying in your own lane. And there's no need for me to get my hands and like that kind of thing. I'm just gonna mess it up and make it like more of a problem for for my designer. Oh my gosh, like, why

27:19

don't copyedit Yeah,

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exactly. Like, my Well, my VA says to me all the time. She's like, I uploaded a blog one time when she was on vacation, a blog post. And she's like, What are you doing? Stay out of the website back ends until I'm back from vacation. I was like, No, I'll just do it ease. It's how hard could it be? And she was like, Don't touch my stuff while I'm on vacation.

27:48

Oh, I have clients like that to you. And it's really fun.

27:51



Yeah, oh, that's funny. But I mean, like, I mean, I think the big takeaway from all everything that you've talked about, and taught us here is really just, like, figure out which pieces you really understand and can do, and get support for the others and figure out how it all sort of works together. Because, again, this is like, this is the piece where the magic happens. Like this is a piece where you go from, you know, document on the screen, to holding that book in your hand and like you know, doing like the Instagram reveal video and like opening up the box and all that. It's like, the most exciting part of the process. And it's so easy for it to go like off the rails. So this was super, super helpful. Thank you, Susie, please give me a book recommendation. You know, I'm not letting you go without one. Oh, no.

28:43

Okay, so, okay, one book, I'm gonna give you a book recommendation. And then I'm going to tell you something fun, too. So one of the book recommendations that I have that is like a book that really shaped me, but it's more about marketing. It's not so much about design, but I feel like every single person can use this book, even if you just hold a yard sale, this will help you. That book is called Influence by Robert Cialdini. And I absolutely love that book. It was so hard for me to read as someone who is not a native English speaker because it's all about psychology and persuasion techniques to for marketing. It was really hard to get through it. It was a very, very dense read. I took so much away from it that I can apply every single day to my normal life and then to my business. And so I absolutely recommend that book. Okay, that's a good one. Yeah. And then on the fun side, I actually okay, this is a little bit of transparency about my life. I actually don't read a lot. i That's okay. I work on books every single day so much and I always try to read my authors books. When I first started this business, I was like, I'm gonna read every single author's books and eventually I was like, I can't keep up I'm not active outside all the time, I'm read that much I can't keep up anymore. But at the moment, I'm reading a book that will help me in the near future because I am going to travel. So I'm reading a travel guide at the moment. And it's all about grace. It's all about Athens. So Oh, very nice. Super, super excited for that.

30:23

Well, that sounds like a great trip and a good reason to read.

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kind of book I can, I can easily read I love I like read this, like I started reading it and was done within like a few hours already. And now I have to go back to the nitty gritty. Excited. So this is the type of book can't convey quickly.

30:42

Well, I look forward to by the way hearing about your trip to Greece, because that sounds fantastic. And I think that you should also either leave a review or send a review to the author of influence that says This book will help you even if it's plain air a yard sale because that's an awesome testimonial.

30:59

Wow. Yeah, I should I should I actually just met someone and that has worked with the author before so

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should pass that along. Because I bet that they would love to have that for marketing. That's, I mean, what a great that's a great testimonial, and I'm sure something like that they haven't gotten before you know what I mean? Like not a little Alright, those are, those are good reading recommendations. Susie, this was such a fun conversation. Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it.

31:25

Oh, thank you. And now I'm really excited that I was able to share this with you and your audience. And thanks for having me on your podcast.

31:32

Absolutely. Thanks for listening to today's episode of the right publish 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.