

Paleo Solution - 411

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Robb: Six listeners can't be wrong. Hey, folks. Robb Wolf here. Super cool podcast today. I get a lot of questions about should an individual write a book, how should they go about doing it, should they self publish, what are the ins and out of getting on New York Times bestsellers list and stuff like that. I've been kicking around for quite a while how to tackle this and then it occurred to me that we might bring the guy who helped me with my book launch for Wired to Eat, Tim Grahl.

Tim is an expert in this whole book launch story. He also has recently published his own book called Running Down a Dream. It's a really cool podcast and Tim is one of the arguably most knowledgeable people in the world on the book launch and publishing scene, all the ins and outs of what you should and shouldn't do.

It's a calculus problem. It really depends on the individual and what the individual's goals are, what you should ultimately do. But the whole thing really is about running down a dream. Like when you decide to write a book, under the best of circumstances, it's an enormous undertaking, far more challenging, far more exposing than what people would typically appreciate.

I think we'll get a lot out of this. If you're not into the idea of books and book talk, publishing, you might still get some interesting life lessons out of this. But, anyway, Tim Grahl, Running Down a Dream, amazing guy.

Tim, how are you doing?

Tim: Good. Thanks for having me, Robb.

Robb: Hey, man. It's an honor to have you on the show. If folks aren't aware, you -- I think I mentioned this in the intro, but you helped me with the launch of Wired to Eat and you were an absolutely stunningly on point resource. I cannot thank you enough for the work that you did. We learned an incredible amount just going through that process. But how did you get interested and involved in this publishing scene? What's your back story on that?

Tim: I backed into it. I didn't graduate college with plans to be a book marketing expert. I actually graduated with a computer science degree and had plans to sit in small dark rooms and churn out computer code. But along the way, I was

doing a bunch of freelancing and I started working an author named Ramit Sethi for the launch of his book 11-12 years ago.

I was just doing the tech stuff. I wasn't overly interested in what was going on or didn't really understand it. He's a marketing genius. I was working on it and then this book came out. I didn't have a lot of expectations for it. He's this early 20s guy writing a personal finance book, had no publicist, was not doing a book tour at that time, was not going on the Today's Show. I'm like who's going to buy this book?

And then the book came out and was a New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller and it was completely through his own platform of his email list and following and blog and all that kind of stuff. It just--

Robb: What year was it?

Tim: I think it was 2007. I'd have to go back and check. But just look up the book I Will Teach You To Be Rich whenever it first came out. I worked on it the year leading up to that. And so it just fascinated me. I didn't understand how book launches worked. I assume they were all like driven by end caps at grocery stores and Barnes and Nobles and airport bookstores. But to see somebody 100% drive a New York Times, Wall street Journal bestseller just through their own platform was just fascinating.

It put me on this quest to, one, really learn everything I could about the way he did it and then, two, to find out if it was repeatable, to see is this something unique to Ramit or is this something that other authors and any author can do? And so I really got interested and it wasn't too long after that that I just focused my entire consulting firm on working with authors.

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That's what got me started. Since then I've worked one on one with hundreds of authors and dozens of books and had a lot of success in that but it was mostly just driven by this wanting to figure out how this works. I've always been a big reader, anyway, and love books, fiction, nonfiction. I've always been a huge reader. And so getting to work with authors, it was like -- I was a fan of yours. I'd been into CrossFit for a long time. The Paleo Solution was must read. To get to work with somebody like you and other people that I've enjoyed their reading or their writing and their work is also just a fun job. It's better than churning out widgets somewhere.

Christopher: That's awesome. It's funny, over the course of time, I've mentioned this several times, early in the history of, I guess, the blogging and podcast, all of the

questions centered on health related issues. Now, we get a ton of questions around career path and peripheral piece to that career path story is should I write a book, how do I go about writing a book, how do I publish it, do I need an agent?

There's a million different moving parts with that. Could you maybe -- I'm trying to think. There are probably four different buckets that we could put people into. There's person with a passion project. They have a Twitter account that still looks like an egg. To someone that's developed a pretty robust following and they've got their finger on the pulse of maybe some new happening event. I mean, why would someone publish a book at this point?

Tim: Well, I think there's lots of different drivers. One group would be just people that feel like they have something to share and so they want to write it down. My uncle wrote a book mainly for his grandchildren. He just wanted to write down some things that he thought were important. There's a reason to write a book.

I think other people think of it as a way to get the message out about something. Of course, there's lots of competing desires. You write a book because you do want to change the world for the better. I believe most people that write books are legitimately trying to do good in the world. Because there's easier ways to make money or better, definitely better ways to spend your time than writing a book.

But I think there's this putting something out in the world in a format where anybody can access it and it can go further and go places that you can't go. But the other thing is, that it really, if we're talking specifically about nonfiction, it's a really easy way to establish yourself as an expert. If you've written a book on this subject, people assume you're an expert on the subject even without reading it.

And so when you add "author of" to your bio, it changes the way people interact with you. I wrote my first book, your first 1000 copies about book marketing. It's like this little 110-120 page self-published book, has some spelling errors in it. But before that book came out I had lots of New York Times, Wall Street Journal bestselling books. I had five clients on the New York Times list the same week. I did a ton of work. But when the book came out, people saw me as an expert.

Robb: That's fascinating.

Tim: If you want to be seen as an expert in a he field, writing a book is a pretty straightforward way of doing that. I mean, writing the book is not straightforward but once you have the book it's pretty -- it just does that thing. It bridges this gap between marketing and helping in a way that nothing else does. If we give somebody a brochure they're like, okay, you just gave me something

to throw away. But you give somebody a book and it feels like a gift even if it's your own book.

So many people would hire me because they bought my book, never read it, but assumed I was the expert because I had the book. I'm sure you noticed the same thing. You're one of the first ones to write about the Paleo diet. You had probably written about it on your blog or whatever, I don't know, because I didn't hear about you until the book came out. And then it's like, "Robb Wolf, he's the Paleo guy." He's the expert because he has this book that I've never read.

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I think that's a really straightforward way. If you are trying to establish yourself as an expert in the field, having a book on the subject is a really good way to do that.

Robb: Tim, when does somebody need an agent? In this calculus problem, when do you go out and track down an agent?

Tim: I have some pretty strong opinions on this that maybe even your agent wouldn't agree with. I feel like -- So, most publishers are not going to be interested in your book unless you have some plan and means to sell the book yourself. If you believe that you're going to get a publishing deal and they're going to help you promote your book, you are extremely mistaken.

Most books traditionally published or self-published sell 250 copies in their first year and a thousand copies in the entire life of the book. Most publishing houses are not going to be interested in you even if you've just written a masterpiece. They're not going to be interested unless you have a platform which platform is just industry speak for "I have a way to sell my book" whether it's traveling and speaking in 100 places, whether it's a huge social media or podcast or blog or whatever, a plan to sell your book that is feasible.

You got a huge deal in your book. Sure, the book is great, changed my life, you're a really smart buy, but if you didn't have the platform you had, there's no way you would have gotten the deal you got which was a really good deal. And so then you have to back that up a level and say, okay, an agent has to be able to sell this book to a publisher. They have to feel like they can sell the book to a publisher.

You have to have a plan on why an agent would want to represent you because they're basically working on spec until there's a deal. My thing is, one -- and it's different between fiction, nonfiction, but assuming your audience leans heavily

to nonfiction, I'm going to talk mainly about that. Most books sell to publishing houses using a book proposal. A book proposal is just a plan for the book, what's the book going to be, what's going to go into the book, what's your platform, who are you, why are you the person to write this book, how are you going to sell this book. It's just all of that written out.

Usually, your agent is going to want to see part of that. But also you have to remember, if you get an agent today, you're roughly two years away from your book being published even if it's already written. I think if I was looking for an agent, I would need to have a really strong idea for the book that's pretty locked in understanding and I would need to have a pretty established platform.

That means, a really -- like I could make a case for why I could sell at least 10,000 copies of my book in a year. At that point, you could probably get an agent to represent you. Any other time you are going to have a hard time getting an agent to represent you, a reputable agent, an agent that actually has contacts that could sell your book. You might be able to get somebody that says they're an agent but they won't actually be able to sell your book.

You just have to really know what you're getting into and understand that you need to understand the economics of the entire thing. The publishing industry does not run on the love of literature. It runs on money and it runs on do I think I can make money off this book? Because they'll say that they are supporting literature but then they'll publish Kim Kardashian's book of selfies because they know they can sell a shit ton of copies.

I think understanding -- Of course, there's people in publishing that loves books, that love literature. Most of them don't get paid much so they're in it because they love it. But the machine itself runs on money and you have to understand the economics in how everybody gets paid so that you can make a really good case for why they should take a chance on your book.

Robb: Yeah. When I got my first raft draft edits back for *Wired to Eat*, it was all red. I mean, like all red. Every joke, every witticism, every diversion was red lined out. What all the suggestions were was basically going to be seven days to Paleo abs. I freaked out. Publishing *Wired to Eat* was a huge struggle and I'm very happy with how it turned out but it was an absolute battle on the back end because they really wanted to turn this thing into a mass produced entity.

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I didn't realize this but about 99% of the health and fitness books are ghost written so the primary author gets interviewed, somebody puts it together and there's a very specific format to that. I didn't even realize it but apparently I

write in a novel format where chapter one leads to chapter two leads to chapter three. But it completely freaked my editor and publishers out. They had not seen anything like this.

They're like, "When are you going to tell people what's going on?" I'm like, "They got to get from chapter one to chapter two." I mean, they were virtually having seizures over this. It was a huge struggle. And then, finally, I said, "Hey, when's the last time you worked with someone who wrote their own book? Like literally sat down and wrote their own book?" She paused and she's like, "Maybe about 11 years."

That might be the problem but, I mean, even there, I had a big well respected publishing house, had a top of the food chain agent but then just the fact that I actually wrote my book and wasn't following the formula or process, it very nearly scuttled the whole project, which I would have never predicted that.

Tim: Yeah. It's interesting. I remember, because I came in, I think, towards the--

Robb: Right around that, yeah.

Tim: Yeah. That's pretty -- I've gone to battle with publishers over every aspect of the publishing because some authors I've worked with for years and years through multiple book launches. I would be around for the whole process. We would go to battle over titles. We would go to battle over covers. We would go to battle over format. We would go to battle over pieces of the book.

You have to be ready for that. I guarantee you, Robb, the only reason that you got what you wanted in the end is because they had so much money in the project already. If you were somebody that gotten a \$5,000 advance, they would have told you to go F yourself and give me the money back and you're on your own. The only reason you got away with that was because you were probably top two or three books that they were publishing that year in terms of money into the project already.

And so that's the other side of traditional versus self-publishing is you now have other people involved in your project that have -- it's that whole thing. It's the difference of dating versus being married. Dating, you're giving flowers every three days and all that. Then you're married and it's like I don't do that anymore. It's like that with your publisher. Beforehand, they're like, "Let's go out to dinner. You're so amazing. Let's sign this deal." You sign the deal and then you send them your book and they're like, "No, you're not going to do this."

Again, you just have to understand the economics because at the same time if you would self-publish *Wired to End* you wouldn't have probably gotten carried in Barnes and Noble and Costco. Was it Costco you got carried in, right?

Robb: Yeah. The one thing I will say that they did a great job with, we were everywhere, I mean, front placement in all the Barnes and Noble borders, independent bookstores. We're in, I think, 160 Costcos or something the first week and then ended up getting a bunch of others. But that was entirely the extent of the support we had. I did not get a single, to the degree I received any news pieces around that, that was completely on my own which, to your point -- yeah.

Tim: And you have to understand -- Well, first of all, do you remember first week sales? Pre-orders and first week sales, what percentage came from in store? All in store? Costco, Barnes and Noble, independent bookstore? Do you remember? Because I remember.

Robb: I don't.

Tim: It was 15% of all sales. So, all of their effort went for 15% of our sales and that was what they brought to the table. And again, the only reason you even got that placement was because you were one of their top books of the year. I've talked to several people that sit in on these meetings at publishers and when they have meetings for what they're going to do for publicity and sales, there is the A list, the B list and the C list.

There's like two A list authors per cycle or whatever and they get 90% of the push. Then there's a handful of B list authors that get the other 10% and then about 90% of their books coming out are C list authors that get zero support, probably won't even be carried in bookstores. That's just how it works.

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And so that's why you had as good an experience as you're going to have with a publishing house because of your status. If I got a book deal at my status, I would be lower B list maybe, maybe C list and they would be like, "Your book is coming out," and that would be the extent of it. I think when people are thinking about putting their book out into the world, again, understanding the economics of how it works is really important. I think most people generally think, "Oh, I've got a publishing deal. They'll promote it. I'll sell a bunch of copies. All will be good." It doesn't work that way.

Robb: Right. And maybe some context around that. The reason why I was able to get the deal that I did, even catch the attention of the agent that I have, Celeste Fine,

the first book, *The Paleo Solution*, is really a unicorn in the publishing scene, first time author, New York Times bestseller. It's getting close to globally a million copies sold. It was through a pretty obscure publishing house, Victory Belt, which up to that point they had focused exclusively on martial arts, MMA, Brazilian jiu-jitsu instructional.

A very good friend of mine, Glen Cordoza, was one of the primary writers for them. I was tinkering with a book. It was largely going to be a guide for my Paleo solution seminar that I was doing. I was doing this all around the world. He was like, "Hey, man, if you're going to publish a book, what's your email list?" I told him the email list. He's like, "What's your monthly number of people that come to your website?" I told him.

He said, "You have a really good chance to make New York Times bestseller list," which we did. We squeaked in there by the hair of our teeth. It was actually a very, very busy week. And maybe that's something we could talk a little bit about. Some weeks you could sell 2,000 copies and make the list and sometimes people sell 20,000 copies in a week and don't make the list. There's all kinds of interesting stuff there.

That first book has done really well, continues to motor along pretty well. That really opened a ton of doors and opportunities for me. But that thing was built off of ten plus years of blogging, social media, being involved with CrossFit, podcast. There was a ton of work that went into basically building a platform where I had folks interested in that first book.

Tim:

I think it would be really helpful to talk about, for people listening, is if you're not Robb Wolf and you want to write a book, what do you do? Because I think that if you are a consultant or you are a coach or you are somebody that's trying to build a business, that is a service based business or even a product based business but more on the information. You were telling me about workshops, that sort of thing.

It's a really good idea to have a book that outlines your thinking, your methodology, your framework because it gives an easy way to promote yourself. You can get on podcast, you can do guest blog post, you can partner with people. You can send your books to people. You don't have to be somebody that sold a million copies to make having a book worth it.

If you think more of a book as a lead gen for your business then it is this money making venture. Most people that come out with books in the nonfiction space, the book is like the hub of this wheel. It's the smallest piece. It makes the least amount of money but it's this thing that you can plug speaking, workshops, video courses, partnerships, all affiliate stuff, all these other ways of making money can

really be consolidated into a book and the book becomes your foot in the door in all these places that it's harder to get without a book.

I mean, we're talking about publishing in traditional publishing and how it works. But I think for the vast majority of people, spending enough money to get a good cover, good editing, help writing the book, whatever it takes, but to put a book out that encapsulates whatever methodology or framework or anything that you do is a really smart move.

Just again, not thinking, okay, I've got to go through this two to three year process of getting an agent, getting a traditional publisher, having to prove my platform, all this kind of stuff. No. Just write the best book you possibly can, publish it, and now you have something that you can use to promote whatever you're doing. That's another really, really smart reason and way to come out with a book as well.

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Robb: Tim, I know this is going to vary, but what type of knot would people be looking at to get a decent editor, to get a good copywriting and everything, layout, a good cover? What is someone looking at to do that? I know it will depend a little bit but do you have some upper-lower -- like you're just absolutely not going to get good quality unless you hit this minimum, and then if you want to pull out all the stops, it could be as much as this.

Tim: Yeah, I would say the absolute minimum would be \$10,000. A good cover design -- what you want with a cover design is for it to look professional. A lot of times you can look at a list of books and be like, "That one's self-published. That one's self-published. That one's self-published." Because it has the papyrus font on it and stuff, you know what I mean? You can't see the title because it blends. You just need a good design. That's going to cost a few thousand dollars.

If you have written your book and it works, you're still going to need copy editing, line editing. There's like two or three or four rounds of editing. And then you're going to need to have it formatted for print and then formatted for ebook. And so, on the low side, this \$10,000. But I had a friend who spent \$100,000 because the book was ghost written. That's \$30,000 to get a good ghost writer. And then all of the editing that he really put a ton of money in the design and formatting and it was color.

There's a big spread there but if you invest -- The thing to think about is to think about, okay, if I invest \$10,000 into a book, my business, I raise my prices, I double my prices within a year of my book coming out because I had so many people coming to me because I had a book. So, if you look at an investment in

your business, to me, it's a simple yes, to invest that kind of money into a book. A well done book that is put out into the world can really change things. You can upload a word document to Kindle and sell it. You don't have to do any of this stuff. But if you want a professional book that you're proud of, I would say the minimum is probably about \$10,000.

Robb: And then sky is the limit from there depending on what you want to do.

Tim: Yeah. I mean, just like anything else. If you get the best person that's done the cover designs for the top five business books in the last ten years, he's probably going to charge you -- I don't know. I'm just pulling this number up. That's probably \$10,000 to \$20,000. And then if you have a ghost writer that is a professional writer that can take your ideas and put them into book format -- I mean, you know this.

Writing a book is hard. I sat down and thought I got this and then it was -- because I'm like I talk about this stuff all the time. But to actually write it in a way from start to finish that it makes sense and it builds an argument and people understand it and all that, that's hard. Yours is like full of science and stuff that you got to make sure is actually correct. It's just tough.

A lot of times people hire ghost writers. What you're describing with ghost writing where these people just put these shit books out with a ghost writer. There's some really great books written by people that ghost write, had them ghost written because most people are not good writers but they still have really strong ideas that should be in book format. Working with a ghost writer to help you solidify your idea and put it out is really good. Yeah, anywhere in between there, it just depends on how much you want to do yourself and how you professional you want it to be.

Robb: Got you. So, Tim, within, let's say, more traditional publishing formats, put like Victory Belt in one category because they typically don't do advances. They do pretty good royalty structure, nothing spectacular but pretty good. And then you go more into Harper Collins, Penguin, all that type of stuff. There's the potential of some upfront advances although that depends on a bunch of different factors.

There's also another flavor of this stuff which you've alluded to even with the self-publishing. There are entities that will basically you pay them an upfront fee, they'll provide the ghost writing, the cover development, and everything. Basically, it's the support and infrastructure of the traditional publishing scene. But you're paying them up front, not the other way around. What are your thoughts on that?

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Tim: Well, I am not a fan of -- If you're paying money they should get zero royalties in the book, in my opinion. Because you're paying for a service. If I have somebody, if I pay to have a building built for me, they don't then make a percentage of all the money I make off of that building in the future. I pay them for their time and then they move on with their life.

I am very against these publishing houses that charge you money to get to publish your book and then they also get royalties. That doesn't make any sense to me. I feel like there are great houses where they will do the entire publishing, the entire self-publishing for you. They'll bring you the editors, the cover designers. You just pay them one fee and they'll take care of the whole thing. But again, you pay them one fee and then they're done.

If they want to charge you to publish your book and then also take royalties, that's not fair. Because what if it's -- like in your case, you sell a million copies. They're taking a piece of that forever for no -- See, the whole thing with publishing is they're taking a risk. They're going to invest all that money into your book and hope that it sells enough copies that they make that money back. And then if your book goes on to sell a million copies, that was a really good bet on their case but it was a bet.

If you have to pay somebody to publish your book and they get a royalty, they're taking zero risk for the reward of making money off your book. I feel like there's only two options. There's you get traditionally published, you pay zero dollars and perhaps get an advance. Again, advance is just advance against royalty. It's not like they're giving you money to publish your book. They're giving you your money ahead of time.

And then there's the other side which is self-publishing but you can pay people to help you self-publish. Again, I treat it like a service. Again, I paid somebody -- You pay somebody to build your website, you would never give them royalties off of every dollar that you make on that website. That's crazy. But people do that with books and it's equally as crazy.

Robb: I think with leasing buildings, it's called triple net where they do actually get a piece of your take of the action.

Tim: Yeah. I don't recommend it.

Robb: Tim, what about potential -- So, one of the challenges that I've seen with folks to the degree, the reason why I think in a lot of ways my first book did as well as it did and continues to do reasonably well, that thing was literally a conversation with thousands of people both online but more specifically all of these hundreds

of seminars, eight hours a day, sometimes back to back days all over the world. I kept notes on this stuff.

I had the basic curriculum that is basically what the Paleo solution is. But then I had all these questions, all these concerns, these reservations. I had these funny stories. Had I tried to write that book five years earlier before having that experience, it would have been just the thoughts I had rattling between my ears and it would have been really absent the feedback that you get from interacting with people.

Sometimes folks will release a book serially online like a chapter at a time or half a chapter at a time. What are the pluses and minuses of that? It seems like a bonus is that you're going to get some feedback from folks and then maybe you can refine your message and see where people are picking things up and where they're not. But what are the pluses and minuses of releasing material serially first?

Tim: I mean, really, the only minus is that if the entire book is already for free online you're probably never going to get a traditional publisher to pick it up. There's outliers. There's definitely people that have. But it's going to be hard. It's going to be harder. On the plus side, you are building an audience. Let me back up. Let me look at that question from a different perspective. I could make an argument, if you came out with Paleo -- Let's say you didn't come out with Paleo Solution. You're at the ten-year anniversary, right?

Robb: Yes.

Tim: Okay. If you came out with that right now for the first time, there's no way it would be as successful. No way. Because the reason why Paleo Solution was so successful, a really big part of it was it was based on research, you've done all this work. It was based on everything you just said.

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Also, your platform that you built by doing all of those workshops, posting all those blog posts, you had this huge platform to launch it. Also, it was timing. You came out with that book right when Paleo was starting to take off. If you came out with that book today, it would be the 108th book on Paleo, do you know what I mean?

That book had kind of a trifecta, solidly based on real world experience and research, huge platform, perfect timing. When you're thinking about a book, the biggest thing going against any book is obscurity. People are worried about people stealing their books, stealing their ideas. That is not the issue. I don't

know exactly who said it. I've heard it attributed to Cory Doctorow and also Tim O'Reilly, but whatever. Obscurity is hard to monetize.

If nobody knows you exist, it's really hard to sell anything. Now, let's look at serializing a book. That is a way and a potentially good way to build an audience for the book. So, my publishing house is Black Irish Publishing for my most recent book. It's Steve Pressfield and Sawn Coyne. The book is the War of Art, Do the Work, Turning Pro, these books published by them. And their goal is to give a book a way to pretty much anybody that will take one.

Now, most people would think that's crazy. The reason why Paleo Solution still sells is because it sold so many. And so what you see in books is that if you can sell 10,000 copies of that book, you have a really good chance that that book will keep selling forever. The interesting thing about books that's not quite the same in movies and not quite the same in music is they tend to grow over time. A book will accelerate and then it will reach this plateau where it will continue to sell at this rate or even higher.

The War of Art sells more copies year on year. Every year, it sells more copies than the year before because it's now out in the world enough that enough people have read it, that they tell enough people that -- it's like the rocket. Once they reach past a certain point it becomes easy. That's how books work. And most books never actually reach that point. They never sell. It's roughly 10,000 copies if you just want to use a number.

Most books sell at that less than a thousand copies and so it never sold enough copies to actually find out if it was a book that would keep selling. Does that make sense? There's lots of amazing books that never get a chance because they only sold 500 copies or 2,000 copies or 1500 copies. And so when you're thinking about coming out with a book -- I'm trying to answer a bigger question than whether you should serialize your book.

What I'm saying is you should be so worried that your book is going to come out and nobody is going to read it, that you will literally do anything. You'll give the book away. You'll serialize it. You'll record the audiobook and give it away. You'll go anywhere and talk about it. It becomes this kind of I will do whatever it takes to sell 10,000 copies of my book.

Because then at that point, it will probably, if it's a good book, it will continue to sell. I haven't promoted your first 1000 copies in five years and I still sell copies every single day of that book. It still sells really well because I worked my ass off the first year to sell 10,000 copies. My thing is whenever you're coming out with a book, your biggest concern is how am I going to get 10,000 people to give this

book a chance, to just read the first chapter? Because that is the actual hardest part of the entire process.

When you look at something like serializing the book or whatever, that's what you're thinking about. How can I build a big enough audience that will give this book a chance so that they'll tell the next person, they'll tell the next person? I literally ride around with a box of my books in the back of the car and whenever I talk to someone and they say they want a copy, I'll just give them a copy and they're like, "Let me pay for it." I'm like, "No." I said the only way to pay for it is read it and, if you like it, tell somebody else about it.

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Because if I can sell 3,000 copies by just shoving it down people's throats, that's the last 3,000 copies I'll ever sell. But if I can get 10,000 people to give the book a change, whether they buy it or not but they just read it, now I get to find out if it's good enough that they'll tell other people. Does that make sense?

Robb: Absolutely, yeah.

Tim: That's why the Paleo Solution still sells ten years later, is because you reached that 10,000 mark because you had a killer platform and then it was a good enough book that it kept spreading. You can look at any book that continues to be successful whether it's Paleo Solution or The Lord of the Rings, it's the same way.

Robb: So interesting. It's such a different way of looking at. I'm well aware of this, the tendency towards obscurity. I had some different numbers with something like 99.9% of books never sell 20,000 copies in their lifetime.

Tim: Yeah. I just look at it as -- Again, we're not talking about fiction. We're talking about nonfiction. I look at, okay, I've got lots of different things to talk about, I've got lots of different ideas to spread and a book is a really solid way to do that but it is one piece of a giant puzzle of what I'm trying to build which is something -- And again, I have to deal with the fact that nobody knows I exist. That's why I'm on this podcast because most of the people listening to this right now have never heard of me. I'm trying to solve my obscurity problem.

Robb: Well, I know you.

Tim: But you know what I mean? I think having that perspective is really important because, of course, I'm a marketing guy so that's what I think about. But I have read amazing books that never really saw the light of day because there was no platform, no marketing behind them and so they just drift off into the ether. And

then, of course, we've all read or been exposed to really, really shitty books that happen to get out into the world because they're Kim Kardashian's selfies.

Robb: Right. Man, it's heartbreaking to think about that. It's a monumental amount of work, putting together a book. Both my agent and my publisher ping me frequently. They're like, "Hey, do you have another book?" I'm like, yeah, I have ideas but I'm probably not going to go near that for another six to ten years. One, I just can't do the put the fresh coat of paint on the same crap and feel comfortable with that.

Two, it's about a year of your life that you're effectively in jail. My health isn't good. My mobility is not good. My sleep is not good. It's a pretty good personal ding that I get on that. Tim, Nicki has mentioned something. She's been doing a lot of marketing study and stuff like that. What some people are doing, they'll self-publish a book and then they will basically give it away free plus shipping.

This addresses a little bit of that obscurity story there. For a lot of people that have written me or phoned me saying, "I'm thinking about writing a book, what should I do," when I ask them what's your primary motivator? Do you want to get rich off of it? Do you want a New York Times bestseller? But when the sentiment is I just want to help as many people as I can, then, I mean, it's by hook or by crook get it out to them and maybe that's self-publish and then free plus shipping or something like that? Could that be a viable option?

Tim: Well, most of the people that -- let me rephrase that. Every single person that I've seen doing the free plus shipping has a back end product that they're selling. They have \$500, \$1000 video course. They have a \$5000 coaching package, whatever. What they're doing is they're using -- if they can get somebody to spend \$5. The hardest thing to do in marketing is get somebody to spend \$1.

Once they've spent \$1, the likelihood of them spending more money goes way, way up. What they're doing is they're shipping you a copy of the book for free plus shipping, and really it's shipping and handling, because what they're doing is they're printing enough that they're getting the copies of the book for \$1 to \$3 and then shipping is really only \$2.50 but they're charging you \$5 or \$6. They're breaking even on the book. what they're doing is they're building a list of people that have spent money and then they do a marketing campaign on the back end to sell the higher price product, which is fine, but that's what they're doing.

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So, it's, again, I think you touched on it a minute ago, it's like what is your goal? What is your goal with writing a book? If you're trying to help people, writing a book is a pretty inefficient way to do that if you're starting there. Doing what you

did, workshops, blogging, podcast, traveling, you're going to reach more people more efficiently that way. And then once you have a big enough -- Again, if you have no platform, you have nothing, you come out with a book, a couple hundred people are going to see it and they're your friends and family that already know all the shit anyway. It's not an efficient way to help people.

You have to have some way to get your book out of our atmosphere and into orbit. And so you've got to build something that gives the book that kind of a chance, otherwise, nobody is ever going to see it and you just, like you said, wasted a year -- well, it takes a year. I would say you wasted a year of your life. And then also if you have never taught it before, if you've never spoken on it before and you try to write it down, it's going to be a shit storm because you don't actually -- you think you know.

I'm speaking 100% from experience. I just spent my most recent book, *Running Down a Dream* took me -- it's only 40,000 words, which is only roughly 40 to 60 days of writing and it took me two years to write because I was trying to figure out what the hell I was trying to say. It's understanding. You need to try this stuff out, speak on it, write blog posts on it. If you can't string together a thousand words on it, there's no way in hell you're going to string together 40,000 or 80,000 words on it.

I feel like building the platform first also prepares you to write the book. Now, again, I don't know how much I should keep saying this. Fiction is a different animal from this perspective. But if we're talking nonfiction, I'm guessing your listenership is potential coaches, nutrition coaches, want to write on this type of topic, you should be teaching it to anybody that will listen.

If you can get five people in a room for half a day for free to listen to you talk about it, you should do that. Because having to teach it for four hours, you'll find all the holes. You know this stuff. This is why you were able to write it down as a book, is because you have done it for years. I think that's a really -- building the platform first and then coming out with a book is the better way to do things anyway.

Robb: It totally makes sense. As you're saying all that, I'm just reflecting that truly by accident we ended up doing a lot of the right stuff. The blog was a passion play. The podcast was a passion play. It was an attempt to scale my reach because we were inundated with questions and I can talk much faster than I can write. All those things grow out of that. The idea around the book was, hey, we're interacting with all these people at these seminars, wouldn't it be great if I could just give them all -- here's the common stuff that we have to have addressed to then have a deeper discussion about any of the rest of it. But just purely by

accident we ended up doing it sounds like a lot of the right stuff to set ourselves up for success.

Tim: Right. And like you said, if I had tried to write the book five years before, I wouldn't have had all these stories, all the anecdotes, all that kind of stuff, you also wouldn't have had the platform. That's the thing. By the time you wrote the book, you had this huge wind at your back that made it so much easier to get that book. Because I think of every person that you share the book with is like a little spark and 99.9% of those sparks are going to go immediately out.

But some of them will catch a little fire and then die out and then some of them will catch a huge fire. But it's a number's game. It's how many sparks can you start with. If you have no social media following, no email list, no blog readership, no podcast, your only sparks are your hundred Facebook friends, your book is going to fail. I'm sure you had things where somebody passed your book to somebody who passed your book to somebody who bought 300 copies or had you come speak for X amount of dollars and bought a copy for everybody in the room.

[0:50:02]

Robb: Yeah. That's what got me into Twitter. Someone gave a copy to Jack Dorsey, and then I went to Twitter and then that thing is for sale in their bookstore.

Tim: Some spark. You had enough sparks that enough of those caught hold that the book continued to go out into the world. And so you did things right by doing them that way. You, obviously, didn't necessarily know that's what you were doing but the way that you did it is the way I would tell somebody to do it. Build a platform first. Get ready. Have a group of people that are listening to you first and then come out with a book.

Robb: That's awesome. Tim, this is all amazing stuff. Let's shift gears and talk about your current book, *Running Down a Dream*.

Tim: All right.

Robb: It took you two years to write what you say should have been four to six months endeavor because you had to hammer out some of these ideas. The tagline within is: *Your Road Map for Winning Creative Battles*. What was the impetus in writing this book?

Tim: I had been doing some work with Shawn Coyne who is the Steve Pressfield's editor. Steve Pressfield is the author of *War of Art* which is an amazing book about creative resistance. And so I wanted to write the how to guide to the *War*

of Art. The War of Art is all about creative resistance and I had over the years developed all of these tools for overcoming creative resistance.

I could get my writing done. I could get my work done. I could get up early, all this kind of stuff, very practical stuff. And so I just wanted to write that down. I actually wrote a draft over two years ago and like a month and a half of just like 30 tools. I showed it to a friend of mine and he's like, "This is a great collection of blog posts but this is not a book."

And then I showed it to Shawn, my editor and he's like, "This is a book that people will read half of it, put it on their shelf and immediately forget." And I'm like, well, that's not what you want to hear. So, I threw the draft out and just started reworking it, talking to people, working on it, putting it on the shelf for a couple of months, pulling it out, working it again, rewrote the entire draft. That didn't work either, threw it away.

Like I said, the book is 40,000 words but I wrote hundreds of thousands of words on this book. Rewrote the introduction probably a dozen times. My first two books were about book marketing and they were these like I'm the guru on the hill books. I've done all this work, I learned all this stuff and now I'm going to synthesize it for you and teach it to you.

And then I was trying to write *Running Down a Dream* that way, of like here's all this stuff I know. Finally, at the beginning of this year, it cracked for me. I realized I couldn't be the guru on the hill. I had to go back and tour my ruins and I need to tell this story of where all these tools came from. I ended up telling the story of when the sheriff showed up at my house with a subpoena from the IRS and when my wife Candice had to take our six-month old son out of the cart and leave the groceries at Kroger because I overdrawn our account because I hadn't made enough money, and the time I had to ask my parents for money to pay my mortgage.

And really show the truth behind what it takes to accomplish something big, a big dream. And so once I cracked that, I wrote the book in a month, the entire book. I just sat down, wrote it start to finish, turned it in, book was done. I mean, we had the editing process but it was done. It took me two years to figure out what I was trying to say.

And so what it became was this book that -- I'd been working with creative people now for over a decade, all these authors and other creative people too, musicians and painters and artists. I've gotten to see a lot of the behind the scenes. One time my client stopped responding. For a month, I couldn't get a hold of him. I finally tracked down his business partner. I was like, "Where is this guy?" He's like, "Oh, he's back in rehab." Trying to draw him out so that he can

get back to work." And then I would watch my client, I would go to a conference and watch my client speak and just do this amazing moving motivation speech while at the same time their spouse had just left them.

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I saw what was really going on at the same time I was living my own nightmare of trying to sacrifice everything for this idea of what I wanted. And so I decided it was time to let the cat out of the bag and tell the truth of how this stuff really works. I couldn't tell all these stories of my clients so I decided to just tell my own story.

That's what it became, is this story of what it takes to run down a dream, a lot of stuff I learned along the way that, hopefully, you can learn from too, and then some surprising things that I found that I think most people will be surprised about at the end of the book. Yeah, so that's what it became. A very different book from my previous ones but it's also resonating with people in a way that none of my other writing has ever resonated.

Robb: I love the book. You sent me an advance copy and devoured it and I absolutely love it. It's cool. As you were talking, I was just reflecting on -- clearly, we've been playing back and forth on scheduling for a while trying to make this thing happen, mainly falling down on my part. But I really wanted to get folks some information around this book publishing topic which clearly you're a remarkable expert on that.

But really, at the core of what these folks are trying to do is run down their own dream. Otherwise, even people, people never understand how much work is involved with really writing a book. But just sitting down and thinking about it, folks are at least somewhat prepared. They're like, okay, this is going to be a big investment. You're really exposing yourself. Being edited is being about as laid bare as you can get. People really are running down a dream.

It's cool that we dove tail that into this story because it's not just that you've helped lots of people be successful within the book industry and publishing industry but finding your own path through this and that path wasn't remotely easy.

Tim: Yeah. I think the most surprising thing for people is that I know whatever I was going through this. Because I've had people that were very good friends of mine during the really hard times in the book and they reached out to me and they're like, "Dude, I didn't know you were going through this while we were friends." Well, yeah, because it's not like what you post on Instagram, which there was no Instagram then. This is not what you brag about.

I remember at those times feeling there must be something wrong with me because this is so hard. What I want people to understand is that if it's hard it's because you're doing it right. Of course, there's easier ways to do things and you read books to try to overcome obstacles and stuff. But when you're doing something creative whether it's starting a new business, whether it's writing a book, whether it's putting together a new talk, whatever it is, by definition, you're doing something that has never been done before.

Which means there is no methodology that will save you from messing up and screwing up and doing it wrong and having to back up and do it again. There is no path set out for you. I think seeing -- What helps me now is seeing that there are road, there's like these road signs along the way that are like, "Yes, you're doing it right. Yes, it's still hard but you're on the right track."

There's this moment for me where I was about six years in and I was really just like, "This sucks. Why is this still so hard?" And I read this article by Jason Fried who started 37 Signals which became Basecamp and he talked about basically his path of becoming really good at business. It took him ten years. And then, of course, it dove tails with Malcom Gladwell's Outliers and other things.

It gave me this feeling of it's okay that I'm struggling because I've got four more years until I'm good at this. And what was really weird was it was right around my tenth -- it was four months after my ten-year anniversary of quitting my job that everything turned over for me and it got easy.

Robb: Wow. That's cool.

Tim: Yeah. On one hand, it's cool. on the other hand, it's like, "Wow, that was ten effing years."

[1:00:04]

But I think for those people listening and that read the book and all that, as you go through the book, you'll see what it really takes. If you're on year three or on year eight and it's still hard, that doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. It just means you're actually doing it because most people work their shitty job and spend the weekend watching football or whatever they need to do to forget about how much they hate themselves and the fact that they gave up on their dream 20 years ago.

And so their life is relatively easy. They get their paycheck and their bills get paid and they can do whatever they want, but they gave up a long time ago. And so the people that I know that are really struggling, it's because they made this

choice that they were going to do something hard. And lo and behold, it is hard but it's worth it. I mean, I'm sure you could speak to this on your own journey too but that's what I'm trying to get across in the book.

Robb: Well, you did an amazing job in it. Again, I think that that's such a cool way to dove tail into this, this story about should one publish a book? What are the ins and outs of publishing the book? And reminding people that these creative processes are going to be a remarkable challenge, much more challenging than what you would ever imagine at the beginning.

Tim: Yeah. I feel like if I ever actually knew how long something would take or how hard it would be, I would never start anything ever. Every time I start I'm like I got this locked. It will be three months. And then like two years later, I'm like, "All right, I think I'm almost done."

Robb: Right. It's a little bit like having kids. You get some amnesia and you're like, "Oh, it wasn't that bad." And then the first couple of weeks of sleep deprivation, you're like, "Oh my god."

Tim: Yeah, for real.

Robb: Tim, I'm so stoked we finally got you on the podcast. Really still incredibly impressed and honored to have worked with you on the launch of Wired to Eat. Where can people track you down and remind folks about the title of your newest book?

Tim: Yes. If you're interested in the book launching marketing stuff, I have tons of free information at booklaunch.com. And then the book is Running Down a Dream named after the Tom Petty song and if you want to find out more about that and everything that I do, you can see that at runningdownadream.com.

Robb: Awesome, Tim. Are you going to be doing any speaking or anything soon? What's your general plans?

Tim: Most of my outreach is podcasts and then some other things I have planned but my wife started grad school a little over a year ago. I put it like -- what's the word? I decided not to travel. I have traveled one time for business in the last over a year. But I found that unless you're doing it a lot, it's a pretty inefficient way to market a book anyway.

I'm talking to more people right now in your podcast than I could ever get to come into a room and listen to me speak. So, I like doing the remote stuff. It's mostly just this kind of stuff and reaching out to people that I think are doing -- My favorite thing about book marketing is it's mostly just connecting with other

nerds. I get to hang out and talk with you for an hour. That's pretty fun. That's my plan. I'm in Nashville. I just hang out here a lot.

Robb: Awesome, man. We are supposed to get out to Nashville sometime early in 2019. We have to get together and share some chow.

Tim: Absolutely. Let me know.

Robb: I'll do it. Awesome, Tim. Thank you so much for everything you've done and continue to do for not just myself but a lot of other folks.

Tim: Yeah. Thanks, Robb. Thanks for having me.

Robb: Okay, take care.

Tim: Bye.

[1:04:08] End of Audio