

NA: Hi, everyone. This is Nina Amir, the Inspiration-to-Creation coach and the author of *How to Blog a Book* and *The Author Training Manual*, both Amazon best-selling books.

I'm here today talking about publishing, actually talking about many different publishing options you have and one particular option, and I'm here with Terry Whalin who is the acquisitions editor at Morgan James. Welcome, Terry.

TW: Yes, great to be with you today.

NA: It wasn't that long ago we saw each other in San Francisco, right?

TW: Yes, not too long ago.

NA: Let me tell everyone a little bit about Terry. I'm going to give you some background on Terry so you know who he is and what he's done because it's actually pretty amazing. I learned some things about Terry when I read his bio that I didn't know such as how many books you've written, Terry. Pretty impressive.

TW: It's amazing, yes.

NA: Terry Whalin understands both sides of the editorial desk as an editor and a writer. He has worked as a magazine editor and his magazine work has appeared in more than 50 publications. A former literary agent, Terry is an acquisitions editor now at Morgan James publishing, he has written more than 60 books through traditional publishers in a wide range of topics from children's books, to biographies, to co-authored books.

Several of Terry's books have sold over 100,000 copies, which is very impressive. Terry's newest book, *Jump Start Your Publishing Dreams: Insider Secrets to Sky Rocket Your Success* is packed with insights. Also, Terry has an innovative online training course to help authors effectively connect with literary agents and editors called Write a Book Proposal, which we will talk about a little later, and Terry is a popular speaker and teacher at numerous writers conferences and an active member of the American Society of Journalist and Authors.

Terry and I did just see each other, I think it was maybe just about two weeks ago at the San Francisco Writers Conference and what I didn't know about you was that you, like me started in magazine journalism because that's my degree. It's actually in magazine journalism.

TW: Yes. I thought that's what I was going to do. I lived and breathe newspaper journalism, but walked away from it really for about 10 years. I was in linguistics actually and wandered back to it, started create letters for magazines and that's where I got started doing that.

NA: Interesting. I switched over because I started freelancing. I worked for a bunch of regional publications and then I freelanced, then I was asked to edit a book and that's how I got started.

TW: Wow.

NA: There are lots of different ways to publish today – traditionally, hybrid, indie and there are many different types of publishers in addition – small, medium, large and independent. Do you think that you could give us a little bit of an overview especially since you're working for what is called independent

publishers? Can you give our viewers today a little bit of an overview of different types of publishers that are out there?

TW: Yes, Nina. That's really a great question. There are traditional publishers that most of us think of. The big five, I'd say Simon and Schuster, Random House, Hachette where you go through an agent, you get an agent, you get your material with the agent, the agent gets a proposal from you, shops that proposal around, get you a book deal. That's a very common way and a way that I've been doing it for many years. That's one option for people, but it's very hard to go through all those [inaudible] that they have to get your book out there into that traditional market.

One of the popular ways that people are doing things these days is through self-publishing and that's at the other end of the spectrum, I would say, where you have complete control over your content, what your cover is going to be, what your interior is. What people don't realize about self-publishing, I think is the real challenge that they have to reach their target market. A lot of people don't realize that CreateSpace does over 50,000 titles a year and the same thing with the Author Solutions companies, they appear in about 20 different brands out there. They make great money for the publisher is what I'd say about them. For the author, not so much.

I met a number of authors that have spent \$20,000 or more with the Author Solutions companies. They appear like a lot of different names: WestBow, iUniverse, AuthorHouse, Ex Libris, Trafford, a number of different names that they appear under, but they're all produced by these people that are in the Philippines and they do about 50,000 titles a year as well. That's not a way that I recommend other people to go, but they can certainly go that way and their calling team is very persistent with people, I guess, I would say to make you realize that you can't get published with them.

There are kind of this two spectrums and I guess in the middle is the company that I work for, Morgan James Publishing. We call ourselves more of a hybrid because we're not truly, truly traditional in a way we operate and we're not truly self-publishing either. We receive 5,000 submissions a year, but only do about 150 books. There is a vetting process that's very important – I know to traditional publishing – but yet we publish a lot of books. We're doing around 150 books a year, which is a lot. We're considered a medium-size traditional New York publishing house by the New York community and our books have been on the New York Times list over 20 different times.

NA: That's pretty amazing. I know you told me that you've seen some books in the stores at the airports as well. You have good distribution, which is important.

TW: It is. I think that's one of the keys to anybody that wants to figure out how they're going to get published, is how to get your book out there in the broadest possible way. Our books at Morgan James are distributed through Ingram Publishing Services. Now people hear that and they go, "Oh, Ingram. I know them. Yes, I can walk off the street and work with them." No, you can't. We were actually one of the beta publishers with Ingram Publishing Services, which is a paid specialized part of Ingram. What it means on a practical basis is we have 40 commissions sales reps that travel the country, sell the book into Barnes and Nobles, Books-a-Million, Chapters Indigo and Canada.

We're on the phone with these sales reps every single week talking to them about authors are doing to promote their book because every book store in the country buys books based on their perception of what the author is going to be doing to promote the book. So, we want our authors to be reporting to us on a regular basis their activity. We in turn tell that to the sales guys, they in turn talk to the book stores and that's what keeps your book out there in the stores and keeps it selling and not getting return.

Now I hope the people that are watching this understand that all the books that are in the bookstore are there basically on consignment. If they don't sell, that retailer has the right to return that book to the publisher for a full refund. That's a hold over from the great depression that's still with us today. Publishers don't like it, retailers like it because they don't have to take risk on books, but it's one of those realities that still carries on today.

NA: Right. For some of the people who are watching this, they may not have any idea what a hybrid publisher is. There are hybrid authors. So for instance I'm a hybrid author. I self-publish as well as traditionally publish but they think, "Okay, so there's self-publishing where I'm going to pay for it all and basically I'm going to invest in myself, I'm going to invest in my book and I'm going to start a self-publishing company if I don't go with Trafford." Or one of these others you talked about. "If I don't go with an author services company, then I'm doing a startup publishing company and then I become a publisher as well as an author."

Then on the other side of the spectrum as you said, there's the big New York publishing houses that what we think of as the traditional publishing houses where they're giving me an advance and I write the book and they do the rest except for promoting, which we know everybody has to promote these days, but what makes a hybrid publisher and what is the Morgan James model?

TW: Yes. That's a good question. If you may get a contract of these days from a Simon and Schuster, they take world rights as one of the things that happens on books. If you want to do anything creative with your material, if you want to serialize it, magazines, if you want to give it away on your website, you have to go back to them and ask for permission because they control everything on your content. These days, a Simon and Schuster contract as I understand is running about 70 pages and it basically scares the daylights out of you when you get one of these things because it's like, "Oh my goodness, look at all the stuff that they take when you redo it."

NA: Right.

TW: Morgan James is very different. Our contract is only four pages and we allow the writer to keep all their intellectual property. The writer grants us the right to sell it in the bookstore. That's all we really care about, selling in either brick and mortar bookstores or the online bookstores out there, which means that the author could do anything creative with their material because it's still their intellectual property at the end of the day. I think that's one of the real distinctions for the way we operate out there.

Also, we're not a self-publisher so nobody can just walk in off the street and say, "Okay, here's my money. Publish this." We do have that publication board, that's BestBooks and sees that it's an appropriate book for Morgan James or not. An example I'll give you of that is about 30% of our books at Morgan James are Christian and we sell those books into the Christian brick and mortar bookstores as well as online. So you could imagine for our fiction, we're not going to want to publish real sexual content that have that bombs in them or things like that.

That's part of our stance as a publishing house. David Hancock named Morgan James after his two kids so he would like to have published material that he feels completely comfortable, that kids picking the book off the shelf and saying, "Oh, what's this?" Reading it and being okay with it. That's a distinction that Morgan James has.

Then once an author signs with us, we're ready to create their book, another interesting thing that

Morgan James does is for every book that goes through our system, we form what we call an “entrepreneurial vision mastermind group.” It's a fancy term, Nina, but basically it's a telephone conference call. The author can bring whoever they want to the call. It could be an agent, it could be a marketing person, a friend, or maybe it's just them. On our side, we would have a managing editor, a marketing director, a branding expert, David Hancock – the founder of our company be on those calls – and together the group figures out what's the best title? What's the best subtitle? What does the cover look like? What size is the book going to be? What's it going to cost? When is the book going to be released in the bookstore? All these kinds of decisions we make together.

Now I said that really logically like every publisher should do that, but I know they don't. I've been an acquisitions editor with two other publishers of the size of Morgan James and I would show authors their cover and their title, but I really wouldn't care what they told me because the publisher usually controls all that stuff right or wrong. My experience has been over the years, I've interviewed 150 best-selling authors and often when I talk to these authors, they'll tell me, “Well Terry, that's not my title and I hate my cover.” That really doesn't help us sell a book today if you feel like that. We want the author included on board, understanding how all the details of their book came together and I'm excited about it.

About 10 years ago I did a book for a New York publishing house. They paid me a very large advance, it was one of the promise-keepers, it was one of the fastest growing men's movement in America, we got a six-figure advance for this book. They never showed Bishop Phillip Porter who I was writing the book for, the cover of the book. They had his picture and the cover of the book with his hand raised like this – he hated that cover. He wouldn't dare walk out in a stadium, fold 100,000 men to show them that book cover. They didn't include him in the process.

What happened? They took the book out of print after six months. It's gone. It's a really sad story because I poured a lot of work and writing energy into that book that's no longer out there. I'm probably the only person in the country that has a copy to that book. A lot of crazy things can happen over on the traditional side just because they don't include people, but we do and from my experience in publishing, a lot of what is good about publishing is that it's really a consensus-building process.

I've seen some authors come to us with their self-published covers that are awful and we gently explained to them. They don't look very good and we also write it up the flag post, show it to our sales guys and they come back and say, “Oh no, we don't want to sell that.” That's the kind of information that we feed back to them so that if they really want to be successful, let's all work together and develop something that's really great out of your book.

Also in this mastermind process that we do that's free, it's for the lifetime of our relationship because in these calls, we're all about helping our authors know what they could, should be doing, hold them as accountable as they'll let us. I tell every authors, Nina, “I don't care who publishes your book.” I'd say 80% of the responsibility falls on the author to sell books. At Morgan James, we publish about 40% of the guerrilla marketing titles that have sold 21 million copies out there. If you've never seen a guerrilla marketing book, it's all about using your mind, your imagination instead of your pocket book. It's what it's all about. It doesn't have to cost you a lot of money to promote, but you do have to be doing it on a consistent basis. These mastermind calls, we're in it for the long haul. We're still coaching authors that came to us in 2005.

Our publisher at Morgan James who you know as Rick Frishman, now Rick, 37 years ago started one of the biggest public relations firms in the Planned Television Arts. He has worked with – you name the

best-selling author out there, but Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Harvey Mackay, Steven King, Mitch Albom – Rick has worked with all these people and so he got out of what he was doing about eight years ago, became our publisher at Morgan James, he's often on these free mastermind calls. So, you can imagine, you get a guy like Rick focused on your book and how to get more press, more publicity for your book. His advice is pretty incredible for our authors.

So as an acquisitions editor, they basically tell me, “I'm looking for three things. I'm looking for coachable authors that are willing to produce faith in the mastermind process,” I talk to the authors all day long, Nina, and sometimes I'll talk to an author and they'll say, “Well, I want the publisher to do everything for me. I don't want to do any marketing.” I'm like, “Well, okay, whoever that publisher is, I hope you can find them.”

NA: Right.

TW: But they're not a good fit for Morgan James at the end of the day. That's one of the big things. David Hancock always tells me it's about 80% the author. That appearance in that conversation I have with the author is very important for how they're going to come across, are they going to get out there and talk about their book with the people? That's one of my criteria.

The second thing that we look for Morgan James is we look for complete fully-edited manuscripts. To be honest, from my experience in publishing, less and less editing is being done inside the publishing house these days. There are some great freelance editors that can really whip your manuscript into the best shape possible. You control your content under our systems. If I manage to get you a book contract for Morgan James, [inaudible] that we'll publish your book whatever you turn in. We're going to go through it to make sure we don't publish something that embarrasses us or makes us look stupid, but I think it's a good deal in a sense that you control your content. You could see we're kind of a mixture between traditional and between self-publishing. We pay traditional royalties, we pay royalties monthly, they do escalate.

Ten years ago I was an acquisitions editor at another publishing house and I was offering authors 10% of the net profits. Morgan James, we started out at 20%, it does escalate. The more books you sell, the higher your royalty will be. We also produce a book in all electronic formats, not just Kindle. Kindle, iPhone, iPad, Nook, Kobo, all those different devices and we do an aggressive 50/50 split on those electronic royalties. About 30% of our authors at Morgan James have agents so it's very common that I'm speaking with agents in New York, or LA, or wherever they are. Agents are always impressed. We give that high on the electronic royalties.

As a matter of fact, one of my agent-friends who used to work at Random House said that our 50% is double any contract that she's ever seen. Very generous on that side. We also make an audio of every book. The author can either record it or we'd hire the talent at our expense and do a 50/50 split on the audio royalties as well. We pay our royalties monthly is another distinguishing thing. You have to fit into whatever accounting system the publisher has. Some publishers pay once a month, some publishers once a year, some publishers pay quarterly, but we pay monthly on the royalties. We also pay a small advance at Morgan James. According to Publishers Weekly, advances are averaging \$500. With all the large advances, small advances, they average \$500.

We're under market at Morgan James and that we pay \$100 for an advance and it's mostly so that author can honestly answer the very important publishing question that you give an advance. They can say yes and then somebody says, “What kind of advance did you give?” I'd say, “Oh, I can't tell you.

That's all confidential.” We pay advances and we treat all of our authors the same in that respect whether they're going to be New York Times bestseller or a brand new author. We look for three things. We look for coachability, we look for complete fully-edited manuscripts – you don't have to have that edited manuscript when you come in the door, but you have to realize that you're going to be turning that in.

The third element that's in our contract is a little unusual. Morgan James is known as the entrepreneurial publisher and so we're not self-publishers. All the books we sell on the bookstore, those are all on us. We're going to print those, pay you a royalty on those books. It's very common that we have \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 invested in your book just getting that out there into the marketplace. For our New York Times bestsellers, we have as much as \$270,000 invested in those books before we get them out into the marketplace.

In our contract we ask every author to commit to buying 2,500 copies of their own book. Now when I came to Morgan James a few years ago, Nina, I asked them where they came up with this number and they said that our typical author, because of this free coaching and training I was telling you about is selling 2,500 copies of their own book in the first year to 18 months that their books in print, but there's no time element in the contract. You literally have years to buy these books. Now, you get the books from us at our exact print plus \$2. It's an upgraded investment when they sign one of our contracts. We ask the authors to give us that \$2 over the price of the book. So it's \$2 times 2,500 books, \$5,000.

Then what do we mean by print cost? I know from being in publishing a long time, you can fudge your end on that. We don't. Our contract clearly says, let's say your book is a 200-page paperback in the standard size, you buy that book quantities from us, then you're going to get that book for a \$1.59 each. It's very common to sell a 200-page paperback book for \$20-\$19.95. If you do that for 2,500 books, that's \$50,000 gross income there. These are your books. You can give them away, you can sell them on your website, keep all the money from that. We sell the books on the bookstore, we pay you a monthly royalty on that.

Now we could produce your book very quickly at Morgan James, usually about eight to 10 weeks after we get that edited manuscript. Getting it in the bookstore, that's something we talk about, but typically we're about six months out on getting your books sold into the bookstore, which is quicker than a lot of publishers. I've worked with publishers that are 18-24 months out on getting the book sold into the bookstore. Our publication board at Morgan James meets every week, which is a good thing. I worked at two other houses, Nina, and they only met once a month and they never met in the summer time because of vacations or whatever. They never meet around the holidays, so they make a lot slower decisions than our group does, but I'm sending contracts to authors every week. It's a lot of fun and we're making some great books.

We do have a private Facebook group for our authors, they're all in with each other, going to each other's events, we're one of eight publishers in the country, we have our own speaker's bureau with all ideas to get our authors paid speaking engagements, to sell books in the back of the room. David Hancock, the founder of Morgan James says that, “Any perspective author, call anybody in our catalog and ask them about their Morgan James experience.” To me, that says we have a different kind of author out there from talking to different kinds of authors. Believe me, you don't want to call their authors a lot of times. I mean all these horror stories about how they got all these books in their garage and they're trying to figure how to sell them and all that kind of thing.

We don't. We have authors that are very enthused about their book, they were involved in the process,

they understand how their book came together, they're excited about it, they want to tell people about it, and we have some negative complaints out there. If you look online, every publisher has people that don't like them and complain about them because you can say anything about anybody you want to on the Internet and nobody can do anything about it, but the stuff about Morgan James that I've looked at is all from 2008, 2009, and we have very excited authors because they're included in the process of how their book came together.

NA: Right. I know that there are some aspects of your model that are very different in terms of the masterminding and all that. Do you have any way to compare the Morgan James model to any other hybrid authors or hybrid publishing companies?

TW: Well I've seen some contracts from like John Wiley for example where you meant to buy some significant numbers of your books, but it's a whole lot more. More dollar investment per se and I was amazed when I saw that. I looked at those numbers in a while, but I do have a John Wiley contract that I've actually seen that information. Most of these contracts are confidential so it's really hard to gather this information about other companies.

But that principally is the objection that a lot of people are going to object about Morgan James. They're going to object about the \$5,000 deposit and about the fact that they have to buy these books over the lifetime of their relationship. What my perspective is on that particular issue is that I've signed 60 book contracts with traditional publishers. Normally I get to buy my own books at 40% or 50% off from the retail price that the publisher sets so they have seven, or eight, or nine box at the end of the day. It's a whole lot more money than what we're talking about.

I've been with Morgan James almost three years now, Nina, and what I figured out is that somebody comes to us and they don't have the \$5,000 for whatever reason. There's crowd funding ways. I have had some authors that have been successful at raising that money, but if they don't have the money, what it shows me is that they're not a good fit for Morgan James because they're probably not going to spend any money on their book to promote it. They're not even probably going to buy postcards and send out about their book because that's just where they are and that means they're not the right kind of author for us.

NA: Right. That's a good point. Just for our listeners so they know, there are other models out there for hybrid publishers. Most of them are in some ways similar, I would say, to Morgan James in terms of you're either paying something upfront and then getting bigger royalties back, or you're not paying anything, but you're getting money faster. There's always something in there that's somewhat similar.

What would you say are the biggest benefits to going with this kind of a model for the author?

TW: Well, I think one of the biggest benefits is that the team approach, I think to have that helping hand out there really, to know how to get you from one place to another. Like some of our authors for example, they won't get on the New York Times list. Well, that's cool. We've done that over 20 times so we know how to guide authors to be able to do that. You've got to have a different kind of campaign with that than a first-time author that just wants to get out there and sell a few books or sell in the bookstore. That's a different kind of thing. We gear the mastermind process to where the author is on their journey, is what I would say.

I think that's a beautiful thing. Of course some of our authors listen to us better than others. I did a book about a year and-a-half ago called *The Garbage Man's Guide to Life: Eight Ways to Get Out of the*

Dumps. Beautiful book, these guys came out of the waste management business, [inaudible] sold as waste management company for \$350 million. They hired a publicist and they had all these great plans for how they were going to get out there and sell books. David Hancock came to me a few months ago and said, "Terry, I'm not hearing anything from these authors. Their sales aren't showing anything. Reach out to them and see what you can do." So I called the author, he's discouraged, he's like, "Terry, I spent three years of my life on this book. Nothing is happening." We had to fire our publicist in March, we spent \$58,000 with this publicist and I thought, "Steven, have another mastermind call, they're free. Don't spend anymore money on your book, get the team together and see what you can do."

He's done that now. They chastised him a little bit for hiring a publicist that we never heard of, which is kind of a red flag when you do that because we're in a book business, we know who's really successful at promoting books and who's not. They are somebody we never heard of. There's all kinds of risk in this business, but I think that kind of advantage of having somebody to turn to that can really help you be able to get your book out there in the best possible way is an advantage.

I have authors that ask me, "Was my book in the bookstore?" I say, "I don't know. I'll look, I'll find out." Sure enough I find out that their book has been in the bookstore, but the bookstores are starting to return it because this particular author was promoting your book, but she wasn't telling us what she was doing on a regular basis. The communication channel broke down there and we had no information to feed to our sales guys to say, "This author is active. Don't return their books." We really do try to train our authors how to help themselves through that process. It's not perfect, but we're certainly making some great books and the authors are very excited about it.

NA: And what kind of books are you looking for? What kind of books does Morgan James publish?

TW: We publish all different kinds of stuff. We do how-to, self-help, we do business books, we do memoirs, a few children's books, we do some fiction – we did have a whole fiction division, but they were actually so successful that about a year and-a-half ago it broke off and formed their own company. We were doing 40 or 50 novels. We're still doing some novels, but they have to be clean novels and under 100,000 words, but I'm actually looking for all kinds of stuff that we publish. It's fun.

NA: Right, great. What do writers need to consider as they think about what type of publishing track would be best for them and their books? We've talked about traditional publishing, self-publishing, hybrid publishing and of course there are big, small, medium publishers. What should they be thinking about as they decide what's the best track for them?

TW: I think what they have to decide is how they want to make their books. Do they want to have control over their process or do they want the publisher to just do it for them? Do they want their books to appear in brick and mortar bookstores? Is that important to them? Because that's something that we do at Morgan James, but normally if you self-publish, it's very hard to get your book into those brick and mortar bookstores. Yes, you just have to figure out, and figure out whether you want to go through the process of creating a proposal with your book. I always recommend the authors do that no matter how they publish whether self-published, whether they're traditionally published because that book proposal has so much information that's not in their manuscript about them.

One of the elements in a book proposal is you have to give some comparative titles out there and that information, we use it with our sales people, but it's good for the author to know where they fit in the market. Who is their target market? All those kinds of questions that a lot of authors never even think to ask unfortunately.

NA: Right. Well that maybe the whole premise behind *The Author Training Manual*, my book, it came out this year. Because it uses the book proposal as the basic business plan for a book – which it is, but I tell self-published authors and novelists to use it not just because they want to submit to a publisher, but as a way to evaluate their idea for marketability because when you start studying the market, when you start studying the competition, you can actually take that information to craft in more marketable idea, to craft a better book.

TW: Absolutely.

NA: Yes. That's the idea that I think that everyone needs to go through on what I used to call the proposal process. Now I call it the author training process because I think that when you go through the whole book proposal or the whole business plan, you not only end up knowing where your book should be on the bookstore shelf, whether you've crafted a marketable idea, who your market is, who your readers are and what your content will be, but you'll also know who you are. You know whether you have a platform, you know whether you have any idea how to promote your book – all those kinds of things. You learn.

TW: It's all very important part of the process and I see authors all the time that have decided to self-publish for whatever reason. I was Skype-ing with an author the other day that's got a memoir and it's [inaudible] to the words so that if we were going to publish the book, it would be close to 700 pages. We're not going to publish a book like that. They want to not break that book into several books, which I gave them that alternative. They're not a good fit for us because we're not going to publish a 700-page book out there. It's just not going to sell. It's going to have all kinds of production problems and we're going to put out something that's not going to work.

NA: Right. You've been an acquisitions editor at more than one publishing company. I think you're a good person to talk about what you look for in a proposal. Not just in Morgan James but anywhere. Let's start with the query letter because you get some unagented work, right?

TW: I do. About 70% of our work is unagented. Yes.

NA: Yes. It comes in, it's not represented by an agent, or even if it was represented by an agent. You'll probably still get a query letter first, right?

TW: Often. I might just get the proposal. Even though I've written books about proposal, creation and all that kind of thing, we're not really formal at Morgan James. We work with people, whatever they have.

NA: Okay. Let's just say you get a query.

TW: Okay.

NA: What is it in a query that you look for or that would make it stand out?

TW: Well, one of the things that makes it stand out is the writing process. People say, “Well, how do you judge that?” It is subjective, admittedly, but I've read thousands of these things. A while back I interviewed an acquisitions editor at a major publishing house and I asked them how they knew if they had a good one. I think that answer he gave is probably my answer too. You read the first line and if it's

a good line, you read the next line. If it's a good paragraph, you read the next paragraph.

That's pretty much how it works. You don't want to bury your most exciting information over on page 15 because that editor may never get there. You want to start with a bang, you want to show why you of all the people in the world should write this book and capture our attention right away.

NA: Right. What about with a proposal? Because a proposal is a longer document, lots of different sections, what are you looking for there?

TW: At the proposal stage – I went to pub board meetings at my previous publishers and I would see the marketing people or sales people typically do this, is they take that proposal document, flip through the back to the sample chapters and they read that and see if that interest them. Then if it does, then they flip to the front and see who in the world this person is and why they should publish that person's book. I think again, it boils down to having really interesting information in your proposal. Do you have an audience? Are you developing the audience?

People are amazed for example – you know this about me that I have 139,000 followers on Twitter. Well, I didn't do that over night. I've been working at that for years. I'm still growing my Twitter following out there, but if you have something like that, then tell me about it so that I don't have to dig it up out there, but I just find it in black and white in your proposal.

NA: Okay. That brings me to a certain point about the proposal and about what they're putting in there. I think that majority of authors, especially aspiring authors that have been published before, they think that they're going to submit a proposal and that it's all about just the craft. That they have to have a good idea, be good writers and that's it. My premise is that actually publishers, acquisitions editors are looking for partners, good business partners. They want someone who can produce that product, who can write that book and give them something to sell, but they need a good business partner. Can you speak to that?

TW: Yes. It's really true. If the writing is terrible, we could fix the writing. There are editors out there that can transform your work into something that's highly readable. We can fix all that. What we can't fix is some author that doesn't care anything about promotion, doesn't care anything about how to get their book in the marketplace and doesn't want to learn that. Now there's not part of the competition of publishing and you know this, Nina, as well as anybody, is there's not just one path. That's what we're talking about here, about how to be successful. If we knew what the path the bestseller status is, then we'd all do that. Every book would be a bestseller, but it's not.

One book does these things, it worked great, they sell tons of copies and then we say, “Oh, well, that's the path.” We send the author down in that path and nothing happens for them. We're looking for the right business partner that understands the book business is a business and we want to sell stuff and we got to sell stuff consistently for it to be successful. Few hundred books every month steadily selling is better than going out with a bang and selling 500 books and then selling nothing the next month. There's a discipline and a consistency to this whole publishing business that's very important.

NA: Yes. Thank you. That was very well-described.

Along those same lines, are there three things that set writers apart from the pack? Let's say you get proposals in, you have that three there, the book ideas are pretty similar, the writing is all pretty similar, pretty good, what would set those one writer apart from many others?

TW: One of the things that sets writers apart, I think is the way they come across. When you talk to them on the phone, are they engaging? Do they [inaudible] all the time? Do they ramble around when you talk to them? Are they focused? There's a lot of that that you can pick up on and tell. Are they going to be a good interview for some magazine editor to interview them? Some regular station to interview them? Are they going to keep on track? Are they going to be able to tell stories? There are a lot of those kinds of clues that we're picking up from people. Some of it we pick up when we meet them on person, when we talk to them on the phone, some of it we pick up from their proposal as far as how engaging and really delightful they are to work with.

My wife always says to me that you only get one chance to make a good first impression. Many writers forget that. They send me something they say, "Oh, I fixed something in this. Can I send it to you again?" I'm like, "Yes. Again?" You didn't really make a good impression there with what you're doing and I don't tell them that, but I'm certainly thinking about that. David Hancock, the founder of Morgan James and I talked quite a bit about this. He says, "Yes, Terry, don't send me anymore knuckleheads. We don't need anymore knuckleheads in Morgan James. We've got plenty of them already. The authors that want to be published, they're high-maintenance. They're calling about this or that all the time and we don't need anymore of those people." You have to understand that publishing is a business and how do you come across, do come across well and those are the people that we're looking for – all of us are really looking for really.

NA: Right. I think that speaks to what you mentioned before, being willing to do the promotion, being teachable, coachable, all those things because you don't want somebody who like you said is calling every 10 seconds to ask how to do something. You want somebody who you'll be able to tell them, "This is what you need to do." They go and they do it. They figure it out. Right?

TW: Yes, that's right and not to be wondering all the time, "Did my book sell last month? Are there any numbers here to report to me?" We do monthly royalty report, but another thing people don't understand about the book business is it takes time to get the money in from Amazon, or from the bookstores, or whoever. They have 60, 90 days, 120 days to pay their bills and they're going to take their time. You can't just figure, "Okay, I did this. It must have sold books." You become a nuisance if you ask all the time about that kind of thing.

NA: Right. You mentioned that Morgan James takes novels as well. It is a question that I don't get to ask very often. I have some pretty strong opinions about it and I've heard some answers so I'm curious what yours will be. Do you require a proposal from novelists and how similar is it to a nonfiction proposal or just similar?

TW: That's a great question. I'm actually speaking on Monday night at the American Christian Fiction Writers local group here in Denver about proposals. I believe that fiction authors can profit from writing a proposal because like you were saying before, it's like you plan up what you're going to do. Who's your competition out there? Why you of all the people in the world should be published? I think more and more novelist are going to be required to write a proposal, but fiction more than nonfiction is really based on the story and is this a good story?

It's kind of hard to me, Nina. A number of my colleagues – I won't tell you who – at Morgan James, they don't even read fiction. I read fiction. I spent three years as a fiction acquisitions editor at Howard Books, which is an imprint of Simon and Schuster so I've read a lot of fiction over the years and I can read a few pages and see if it's going to hang together and really be a story that interest me or not.

The other thing at Morgan James is we have a word count limit of 100,000 words. Now most authors want to talk to them – I ask them how long their book is and they'll say, "Oh, it's about 300 pages." That doesn't really help me because I want to know what the word count is and I don't want them to write 125,000 words, I want them to write 100,000 words or less. That's important because it matters how big of book that we produce, where it fits in the bookstore, how it fits on the shelf, how it packs, there's a lot of those little production issues that authors never think about.

NA: Right, yes. I agree with you. First of all I've been at enough conferences where I've heard literary agents say we get so many query letters for the same book, it's the same idea over and over again. I've heard it so many times before, too many Harry Potters, too many mermaids, too many whatever. Just give us something new and I think that's an aspect of not doing the business side of it. Not doing a competitive analysis. The novelist don't want to do that. They just think they have a good idea and they want to write it. I really think that it's helpful to them in terms of crafting something marketable.

I also often wonder or I have to assume, I guess, that if you were to get a proposal from two novelists and they're both equally as good writers and they both have equally as good ideas and one has written a really phenomenal proposal that says they have a platform and that says that they have a marketing plan and shows the competitive analysis in their market and all those things that you would be likely to take that writer over the other.

TW: Yes, absolutely. The other thing that's happening in the fiction market these days, Nina, is that people realize that they have to hire an outside editor, they have to hire somebody on their own dime before they send it off to an agent or an editor to bring that writing up to another level because people are going to read – those of us that have been in this business a long time, we can read a few pages and make a decision whether the writing is any good or not.

You want people to just be excited about your work and one of the ways you can help yourself to build that excitement is to hire that outside editor and find a good one. Find one that people love and have them do a few sample pages to see what they're going to do to your work. Don't do that for free. Before you hire them, ask for some referrals from people. Don't just hire the first one that you come across. There are some really talented freelance editors out there that can take people's marginal writing and turn it into amazing kinds of things. If you do that work, I know it costs and I understand it takes effort and time to do that, but it's going to give you the best possible reception from an agent or an editor that's out there.

I've read this in the publishing literature that they say that at any given point in time, there's probably over a million ideas that are out there in circulation, in agents, email box, publishers box, coming over the transom [ph]. To be an acquisitions editor, I tell people it's like trying to drink water out of the fire hose. It's amazing information that comes to us everyday and I'm trying to be faithful with it and look for good things. What I tell you and every listener that you have here is that I've been in some of the top literary agencies in New York City, I've sat with these agents and they're all looking everyday. We're all looking for what's the next best-selling thing. Where is the next Harry Potter? Where is the next [inaudible], Left Behind? Where is the next book like that? We're all looking for those books. That's what gets us up in the morning and reading our stuff to see what's out there. It's not like nobody is looking for your material and everything is coming back, "No thank you." "Thanks, but no thanks." People get rejected all over the place.

I don't know if you saw this story that was a few weeks ago in the CBS morning program. It's about the

unlikely writer. There is this guy that they told about that was a cartoonist in column and he thought he was going to be a cartoonist. When he got out of college, he applied all over the place for cartoonist jobs – got rejected. Just couldn't find a position. So he worked in animation is what he did in the mean time just to pay the bills, but on the side, he was working on this book. It was a 1,300 page manuscript that he had, that had these little drawings in it.

He was at a comic book convention and brought a few pages as a sample of the work that he was doing and he showed it to an editor at Abrams, and he looked at those pages and he said, “Oh, you got a book for kids? You're doing a book for kids.” This author had never thought about doing a book for kids, but that's what he was doing. So, they took the pages from this author, published his book and talk about now his name is Jeff Kinney and he sold 150 million copies of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

NA: Wow! That's amazing.

TW: Middle school kids, if you're a certain age kid, you'd love these books. Kids talk about how they read these books over, and over, and over. They identify what the little cartoon characters that are in there and it's amazing, but Jeff Kinney didn't even know he was writing a kids book. He thought he was writing for adults. Somebody has to help you as the author to know who your audience is. It might be an editor, it might be a friend, it might be some critique group you're in, some other writing professional, but somebody has to look at your stuff and figure out where it goes out there in the marketplace and once you find that open door, mark through it.

NA: Right. For sure that's a great advice. You mentioned about the novelist getting editors. Do the nonfiction authors also need to get an editor before they submit?

TW: They do or at least have a friend, or be in a critique group, or be in some way to sort of pre-process your material so that the first look at your material is done by somebody else. Gone through that editor or that agent. I get material all the time that it's in the wrong font, it's not laid out right. These authors, they're lost out there, a lot of them. Legitimately so, they have no idea what the editor expects or anything, but if you turn in your material in a Sarah [ph] font, Georgia, Times New Roman, it's in the standard format, double-spaced, not in bold print and not in old English, not handwritten – I've seen all kinds of weird stuff over the years that people do.

Get your stuff in a professional shape, show it to the person and find the right door. In my *Jumpstart Your Publishing Dreams* book, Mark Victor Hansen wrote the foreword for that book and he told the story about the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books that many people have forgotten. Those guys were rejected 140 times. That's a lot of rejection, 140 times. Most writers send their stuff out five, six, 10 times and they go, “Well, I guess nobody wanted this.” No, that's not right. As an author whether you're writing fiction, or nonfiction, or children's books, or whatever you're doing, you're trying to be in the place with the right stuff, talking to the right person at the right time.

A lot of those rights have to line up for you to do that. I champion people's books all day long because I really want people to get out there in the best way and I think there are some prestige to being published by a New York publishing house, which is why work for a New York publisher?

NA: Right. Last question on editing and we're about done anyway. Do you suggest that authors or aspiring authors get their book proposals edited?

TW: Absolutely. Get somebody to pour over that proposal. In all proofreading process, I've heard this

and it has to do with the writing process too. It's people say the hardest thing to see is something that's not there, that's not on the page. In your proposal, if you don't have a checklist or something to show you what the different parts are, you may be missing a whole section and nobody has told you about that. So, somebody should pre-process your material so that when the agent or the editor looks at it, they go, "Oh my goodness. We're excited about this." You want them to generate that excitement from your material.

NA: You have a resource for book proposals, correct? A course?

TW: I do. I have an online course that I developed. It's a membership course. It's \$27 a month for three months. It's what it is. 15 lessons that comes every week, it's step-by-step to help you know really how to position your proposal in the best possible way for that reception. It's self-guided. Some people have taken my course, "Send me the lessons at first" and I go, "No. I'm not going to review your lessons for you for this." But at the end of the course, people end up with the whole huge notebook full of information from me about how to put together a proposal in the best possible way.

NA: That's great. We're going to give them a link for that. Right?

TW: We are. Now I have a free teleseminar that anybody can take. It's Askaboutproposals.com and they do have to give me their email address and their name in order to get that, but it's on replay so they can download the whole hour right away and they can listen to that. I'm answering authors' questions. It's another great resource for people.

NA: Super. You're going to have a handout for us as well, correct?

TW: I will. I got a handout. I got a book proposal checklist, is what I've got that it's a couple of pages, information about what goes into the proposal, what are the expectations an editor has and it gives you just basically the checklist of something that you can go through and say, "Yes, okay. I've got that piece. I need to work on developing that piece" or whatever to put together the best possible proposal.

NA: Super. For everybody watching, we'll make sure that the link to the Write a Book Proposal program is on that for you as well so that you can click through and check out Terry's program.

Before we end, I have two last questions. One is kind of general. Just any last tips or bits of advice that you want to offer to aspiring authors who want to get published.

TW: The normal place that I encourage authors to start is many, many authors want to write a book and books are long is what I would say after writing lots of them over the years. Instead, I encourage them to begin in the magazine world like you and I started this conversation because magazine articles are short. You got to reach many more people with your magazine article than you ever will with your book. I was associate editor about 20 years ago at Decision Magazine. Back then for the Billy Gram Evangelistic Association where we're doing 1.8 million copies of the magazine every month.

It's very common in magazines to reach 150,000 people with your magazine article – 1,200, 1,500 words, it's easier to write and you learn a lot in the magazine craft. You learn how to have the story with the beginning, middle and the end. You learn how to write to a target audience, you learn how to write, do a word count. The editor comes back and says, "I really didn't want 1,500 words. I only want 500 words." Then you have to figure out how to cut and give them what they want. There's a whole learning process that you gain from that experience. I always encourage authors to do that and those of

us that are in publishing, when we look at your proposal, or when we look at your material, or your bio about you, we're looking for experience to see if you have publishing experience and this is the kind of information that you can give us. It's great to do. I'm still writing for magazines.

NA: I still do too when I can and it's a great platform building element if you write for publications especially those in your target market. When I went to college and got my degree in magazine journalism, one of my professors said to us, "If you can write a magazine article, you can write a book." Because at least for nonfiction – he said, "Of nonfiction book is just a bunch of articles all on the same topic strung together."

TW: I've had authors do that. Write for different magazines and they pull it all together and those chapters were articles. Absolutely.

NA: Right. And it's the same concept of behind blogging a book, that you're blogging a series that becomes your book because it's one blog post after another all along the same topic.

TW: Absolutely.

NA: Again, you're building platform at the same time, all great ideas.

TW: I got all those blooks.

NA: That's exactly right, "blooks."

So how can our viewers and listeners find out more about Morgan James or that you want them contacting you directly?

TW: You can. Absolutely. My email is pretty simple. It's just Terry@Morganjamespublishing.com. They could email me there or they can start following me on Twitter. My regular personal email is in my Twitter profile, which is Terry@TerryWhalin.com. People call me one of the most accessible people in publishing, Nina, because I answer my phone, I answer my email. Really, I'm geared to help authors to succeed. No matter what you're writing or what you want to do. I've blogged and I have some great [inaudible] for you to help you.

NA: Right. Why don't you tell them about your blog because you have a blog, correct?

TW: I do. I actually have 1,200 entries in my blog so there's a lot of information in that blog. It's Thewritinglife.ws is my website. It rolls to a blog spot website, but you can get to it from Thewritinglife.ws. That will be on the handout as well.

NA: Yes. Definitely follow Terry on Twitter. He's always got great stuff in the stream that I go check out all the time and share. Do follow him and check out his blogs. You're always a wealth of information.

TW: I appreciate the opportunity here, Nina, it's great.

NA: Look for the handout, Terry's checklist and the information on how to get more information on the Write a Book Proposal program and I think we pretty much covered it. Is there anything else you'd want to add, Terry?

TW: No. I just know that it's really easy for writers to get discouraged and to feel like they're not doing what they should be doing. I just want to encourage everybody listening to this, keep looking for that right connection for you. It truly is out there. Too many people give up too early is what I'm finding.

NA: Okay. I agree. I think one of the primary characteristics a successful author has is tenacity. You just have to keep going and like Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, you have to never give up. Every obstacle has to be seen as an opportunity to keep moving closer to your goal.

TW: That's right. Absolutely. That's true.

NA: Yes. Well, I thank you very much for all this time and all the great information you've shared. I'm sure that our viewers and our listeners have taken tons and tons of notes.

TW: Well, I hope they will contact me. It's amazing to me, Nina, to go to a conference like you and I were at San Francisco with probably 400 people that were there and over and over, I look at writers in the eye and I say, "That's a great idea. Right there. Send it to me." What I've learned over the years is probably maybe 5% that actually follows through and sends me their material afterwards. People look at all the stuff I published over the years and they wonder how in the world I did that. I'm kind of a simple guy. If an editor says, "Terry that's a great idea. Write that up and send it to me." I make a note, I go home, I write it up and I send it to them.

If you do it, you're going to be way above everybody else that didn't do it, is what I'd look at it.

NA: Right. That's right and it's the same for the magazine articles. You just got to keep sending them out, send out those query letters. You send out the query letters and book proposals. That's when something starts happening.

TW: It does. It's amazing.

NA: That's right. Well again, thank you very much, Terry.

TW: Thank you, Nina.

NA: It's been an honor having you speak for me today and I'm sure that everyone listening has benefited greatly. For everyone out there listening to this, until next time. Go out and achieve more inspired results.