

FINAL LOB EPS395 Jennifer Grace

[Liz Theresa]

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I'm your host, Liz Teresa, and I help you launch, build online businesses you love. This podcast is all about entrepreneurship, and I hope you like it. Hey, everybody, welcome to another episode of Liz on Biz.

Here with me today is Jennifer Grace. She is the co-founder and driving force behind Raven & Grace Press. Welcome to the show, Jennifer.

[Jennifer Grace]

Thanks, Liz. So excited to be here.

[Liz Theresa]

I feel like we have all the writerly energies flowing through the podcasts. You know, we just had somebody that's talking about book writing, memoir writing. She was a memoirist, and so I'm really stoked to have you here as we're bringing in the new vibes this year.

So tell us a little bit about what you do at Raven & Grace Press.

[Jennifer Grace]

Yeah, so we are like a hybrid publisher, and I don't know if you know too much about the publishing world, but, you know, there's traditional, which is Hay House. I'm actually a Hay House published author. And then there's, you know, Penguin and Random House and Simon & Schuster, and we all know these names.

They're very, very well known. It's kind of like the big five in IngramSpark. And so then there is self-publishing, right?

And for so many years, there were those two lanes where you either had to get an agent, get your book shopped, chosen for one of the big five, or if that didn't work, you would go and self-publish. And so in the last, like, 10 or 15 years, hybrid publishers have been popping up. And so the distinction is, you know, when you're doing the self-publishing, it's DIY.

You're doing it all yourself. With the traditional, you know, it's just like Hollywood, you got to get an agent, you got to get chosen. And these days, you got to have about 100,000 followers for them to even pick you, because they really want to work with authors that help them sell books, because they give you an advance, about 10,000 to 100,000 just to write your book.

So they want to make sure they get that money back. So you have to pay them back in book sales. Makes sense.

Raven and Grace Press meets you in the middle. So we are, you pay us, and then we publish your book. We do all the editing, developmental editing, the book covers, we do all the marketing, get you on podcasts and television shows and all of that.

It's kind of a one-stop shop. So we are with IngramSpark, one of the big five, as our distributor. And then we get you into 347 bookstores and Barnes and Nobles and Books on Books.

And so it's a way for somebody who isn't chosen, can't get the agent, can't get to the big five and doesn't want an amateur book. So it's really great for entrepreneurs that want more credibility, for speakers who want to get paid to speak. That hybrid publishing lane is really good for individuals like that.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, it's interesting because I feel like I even, I love that you explain the distinction, because I heard the term hybrid publisher, but I was like, I don't know what that really means. So I really appreciate that because I do think that like sometimes when people go to like self publish, for example, there's a lot of people out there that would say, oh yeah, but then you make all the money. And it's like, but are you writing a book for the money or are you writing a book to share your message?

[Jennifer Grace]

Right. And the distribution is really the piece. When you self publish, you don't have distribution.

So it's up to you. Yes, you will make 70% because Amazon will take 30 of the proceeds, but is anybody buying the book? When you work with a hybrid publisher, you still make 70% of the proceeds, but we're distributing your book across the world.

[Liz Theresa]

You can't beat that.

[Jennifer Grace]

It's really, I mean, that's cool. Say go big or go home. If you can't get with one of the big five and you've tried and it's, it's very challenging.

I would say go with a hybrid because even with the, the self publishing, you're going to have to get to pay somebody to do the editing. You're going to have to pay somebody to help you market, to do the book cover. I mean, unless you're this amazing, you know, renaissance person at all.

And there are some people that can, you will still need to hire, but you won't have distribution.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah. And so when you say distribution, just so like, like the regular people and all of us know, but like, does that mean like you're also making sure it's being physically created, like printed and showing up in the places? Is that right?

[Jennifer Grace]

Getting it into bookstores nationwide. Yeah. So even like anybody in bookstores, if it's no, you wouldn't know.

[Liz Theresa]

And then like, and when, as far as getting into bookstores and stuff, like you really mean like I could then go to Barnes and Noble and potentially find my book. That's crazy. Yeah.

That's like, that's awesome. Yeah. I'm glad that you do that for the people.

I'm like, Oh, that's really cool.

[Jennifer Grace]

Like, cause I think that's, it really came out of a needless, like for, for the last 17 years, I am myself a published author with Hay House. I'm a transformational coach, thought leader, strategist. And so I've been really supporting people over the last 17 years to write their books, do their TED talks, launch their podcasts.

And my students would, you know, go on a writer's retreat with me or take a writing class with me. And then of course, want to become a Hay House published author or Simon and Schuster and would get super frustrated because they're looking for authors with big social media followings. And they, they were mindfulness trainers and memoirists and they weren't really like pounding the social media train.

Yeah. Well then they were like, Oh, this stinks. Like, what do I do now?

Then they would go and self-publish, get frustrated because it wasn't enough credibility. And so it really came out of my writing students need to have something professional where they didn't have to have a hundred thousand followers and get an agent to do it.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, cause that's very daunting. And I, I mean, there's even like, well, cause you're in the writerly side too, but like, there's even things where like, if you wanted to like guest write for like, it was a very big publication. I'm not remembering it, but it's like one of the big things out there that you needed like a hundred thousand followers or something, or a minimum of that.

And I think people do that's like, cause for them, like you said, they're measuring based on audience size. It could even be that you don't have engagement, but as long as the audience is there, at least it looks better. Yeah.

Tricky. I mean, they're getting better about that, but it's like crazy that there's a measuring stick for like.

[Jennifer Grace]

Even for actors nowadays, it's hard to get an agent without a huge social media following.

[Liz Theresa]

That's interesting. I didn't even know that. So wait, are you in the acting world or you just know about that?

[Jennifer Grace]

Well, interestingly, the, the career before this 17 year career, I was a comedic actor and a filmmaker. Yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

Cool.

[Jennifer Grace]

A lot of connections in that world.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah. Oh, so like, and it's interesting to see how it changed because of course like people probably, the discernment around like whether you got a book done before social media was probably whether about is the book good.

[Jennifer Grace]

Yeah. About your writing.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah. And like now it's like, it's not about if the book is good, like, doesn't it ever amaze you that like, there's some books that are out there that are like massive books. Like they get like huge and like, everybody's like, oh, I'm talking about this book or whatever, but it's not very good.

[Jennifer Grace]

Yeah. Because they're paying social media influencers on books. To say it's good.

Say it's good. And so, I mean, here we are in the land of AI. Yeah.

Thorough 2 just came out. It's like, what is real and what is fake? And even at Raven and Grace Press, you know, we tell our authors, hey, use AI as a tool, but we are not looking for books written by AI.

We are a legit publishing house. Yeah. And so it's like this, this is the world we're living in.

Nobody knows what's real, what's fake. And when we come back down to creativity, even the actors being replaced by AI.

[Liz Theresa]

I know I saw that. It made me nauseous.

[Jennifer Grace]

So, you know, and so I think that there will be a tipping point eventually where we as humans don't know what to trust anymore. And I believe that, I hope and pray that ultimately we walk away from it all. And we go back to the way that it was where we're in community and creativity is honored.

And yes, there's the tool that we could use it for. But I think that it's going to mess with everybody so much psychologically to not know what to believe. Because I don't think any of us know what to believe anymore.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah.

[Jennifer Grace]

News on social media. But as the video gets better, and we can't even discern. And it's there.

Yeah, I see an explosion and then a shift back to what's real.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, I wonder if people like, I mean, even as I just taught a class on AI, which was, it was kind of fun to teach. Because I even when I taught it, I said, no one's an expert, by the way, because they just got it. But one of the things that I, I thought was interesting is that like, in the, at least like overseas, what they're talking about doing is requiring a disclosure for AI generated things like right now, you'll notice that people do it like optionally, like, it'll be like, did you make this with AI?

You should probably say if you did, but there's, there's no actual like, law or regulation that exists around it. But like in the UK, they're saying if something is created with AI, that at least it needs to have the moniker. And I feel like that's going to slow down a lot of the stuff that is scary.

Yeah, because people can't just use it as a get rich quick. Yeah, like, I'm going to generate a bunch of ebooks on AI, throw them on Amazon, and one of them is going to sell right thing. It's like, like a lot of people are just doing that creating, creating, creating.

[Jennifer Grace]

Yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah.

[Jennifer Grace]

We'll see where the world.

[Liz Theresa]

And I know it's real. That's real weird. So you're a co founder.

So does that mean that the other person is named Raven?

[Jennifer Grace]

Yes, it is.

[Liz Theresa]

So how did you meet your co founder?

[Jennifer Grace]

Yeah, so I recently moved to Nashville, and she actually came to a workshop of mine. And we just connected. And she just has a lot of really incredible skills in like social media and

marketing.

And I was like, you know, if I ever do another business, Raven, I'm gonna call you. Yeah. And then all of a sudden, I was like, Oh, I'm gonna, I'm gonna create a publishing house.

But I need somebody who's been in publishing and really knows how to edit books and copy and all that. And we had a call. And I was like, Do you by the way know that she went to school for publishing?

Oh my god, publishing books and editing for years. And I was like, let's go. And she's like, Well, don't you want it to be Grace and Raven press?

I go, Raven and Grace sounds better. Like, yeah, it does. And so yeah, we have a great partnership.

She does all the developmental editing, formatting, uploading to Amazon Books and Books, dealing with our distributor. And then for me, I am more the sales, the marketing, helping people get booked on podcasts and news shows and, you know, really helping them get their book out into the world.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah. And like, would you ever say that like, when people come to you, right? Do they usually have the book done?

[Jennifer Grace]

Well, that's another interesting. Yeah. So we, of course, have people who are like ready to publish.

And that is the moment that they need to come to us. Does it have to be this perfect polished? No.

Should it be a shitty first draft? No, it should be somewhere in between. Because that is what we offer editing and developmental editing services, but it's got to be done.

Yeah, it's got to be like you, you've done all you can really do without a professional. Yes. Then there's a lot of people who we do meet through my network and then out in the world who are like, I have a I have a dream, I have an idea, you know, and so that's a great place to come do a writer's retreat.

We also do quarterly, a two month book writing contest. And that has been really helpful for people. I mean, this is not write the great American novel, right?

This is really good for, you know, experts, coaches, entrepreneurs who want to maybe even turn their, their business card into a book. And in two months, they're going to have a 30,000

book that they can, you know, use as a lead generation or something like this. This is not like your memoir that you're taking years to write or a fiction book that, you know, takes seven years to write.

Right. Let's bang out a book and get people knowing about our businesses. So what we do is we charge like 97 bucks for the application fee.

Yeah, we have a container. And once a week, you go on for two hours with either Raven or I, and you write in community. And that's all we all need is accountability to get the book out of our head and onto the page.

And so we do the math with everybody, we say sit down, and just for one hour, right? And then say, how many words did I write? And usually people are anywhere between 500 and 1500.

Yeah, call it 1000. And then we go, okay, to write a 30,000 word book, which is a nice size book, that's going to take you only 30 hours.

[Liz Theresa]

Is that how many pages is a 30,000?

[Jennifer Grace]

You know, you can't, you don't go by pages in the literary world. Because what if a book is this big, or this bit, you know, right? No, the size of it.

So right, right. In the literary world, we speak into words. Yeah.

You've ever seen, you know, a good size, normal self help developmental book, yeah, we have about 30 to 50,000 words, that's normal. You see those bigger, you know, memoirs, maybe that's like 70,000. The Harry Potter books are probably 200,000 words.

[Liz Theresa]

Oh, yeah, they're big.

[Jennifer Grace]

You're going from here to here, like a 15,000 word is like an ebook. Yeah, quick book. Yeah.

Oh, then we say, okay, so that would mean if you wrote only 30 hours, in the next two months, you would be done with your first draft. Yeah. And so they break it down, everybody declares their author hours, how many hours they're going to write a week, they have two hours a week with us.

And, and by the end, usually half of the people that submit into the contest, finish their book.

[Liz Theresa]

That's cool. Well, I also feel like by paying \$97, you're in the game, you're in it. Yeah.

[Jennifer Grace]

And I want to community and accountability is what we're all missing. It's like, all right, I have this container, I've declared that I'm going to sculpt out time, I have people watching, I have a mentor. And then we have, we pick five finalists.

So at the end, you have to submit a chapter. Yeah, outline. So we pick our top five.

And then we have our final zoom celebration call, nobody knows who the top five are. And we announce it one by one, but everybody who submitted their manuscript is ready to read five minutes of their book. Oh, cool.

We announced the top five. And then we have the community choose the winner. Oh, wow.

Everybody that submitted votes on the winner. And then they win a book deal with us. So they are our cost is 12,500.

Or that package of done for you from right all the way to getting you on to, you know, marketing and all that's amazing. Yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

But it's a lot of work. I mean, like you should be paid. Do you know what I mean?

It's hard to the marketing for a book. It's like a lot of work.

[Jennifer Grace]

It's a lot of work. And that we're very much on the low end, you know, it could go up to anywhere from 50,000 with a hybrid publisher, you know, down to about where we're so we're on the lower end. Yeah.

And because of my community that I've built, you know, as a Hay House author, I was a radio show host for many years sandwiched in between Wayne Dyer and Esther Hicks. Like I have a huge, huge following of emails. So yeah, when I have one of my authors from Raven and Grace Press publish their book, I have a huge writers community from 17 years and they all write reviews.

They all buy the book like everybody gets behind each other. And so I like books all went to number one Amazon bestsellers within the first two days.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, and also like I feel like it sounds like because you have the accountability piece, right? Of all these people that like come to you and they get to know each other, they probably try to support each other.

[Jennifer Grace]

A hundred percent. I see them all at each other's book launches, like every week up for each other. And then we also do a lot of retreats.

You know, we travel, we go, you know, to Milan and Greece and Turkey. And so we're constantly traveling together. And so they all become best friends together.

And we just have a close community that are like conscious seekers and creatives.

[Liz Theresa]

And so what kind of books would you say like you guys get to like distribute and produce? Like what genres?

[Jennifer Grace]

We really run the gamut. Yeah. We do YA, young adult books.

We do fiction. We do a lot of personal development, self-help, memoir. We're doing our first cookbook.

Oh, cool. I would love to do a children's book. Like we're open.

Yeah. Open to all different genres. We've done faith-based books.

Like we really, we just want to work with people that want to light up the world. And it's really an energy thing.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah. And is it a lot of, is it mostly women writers?

[Jennifer Grace]

No, we have two males right now. One of them is originally from Queens and his family was, you know, in some interesting, you know, it's kind of like Bronx Tales meets Stand By Me. It's such a great story.

And then now we're publishing, that's called Route 80. And it's a road trip to go pick up the guy's dad who died in jail and all the stories growing up. And then Ron Stein right now, he is an executive producer from Hollywood.

He actually produced The Kids Are All Right with Annette Bening. That was Academy Award

winning film. Yeah.

And he's gone from Wall Street to Hollywood to real estate, just has, you know, created millions and millions of dollars. And now his new book Own Your Success is all about the 12 principles of entrepreneurship. And he's amazing.

So no, it's men and women. And we just really like to be excited about the project. You know, we get a lot of submissions that we're like, and then we do interviews.

And like, it's about the person for us more. And of course, the writing, but we know how to make the writing good. Right.

We just want really good storytellers and really good people.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah, I feel like it would be hard to promote something that you weren't like genuinely excited about, you know, like, I have to be super passionate about the project.

[Jennifer Grace]

Yes. I want to get behind it and want to put our name on it. You know, I have a reputation for so many years that I want to keep intact.

So we're only putting out good stuff by good people and we're boutique, you know, so we only take on a few projects at a time. So we're very selective and we can really work one on one. You know, there are other hybrid publishers out there like Hay House has Balboa and not to poo poo it, but a lot of our authors were with them first, you know, came in and they're like, Oh, it's going to be this much.

Oh, wait, now there's this much. Oh, wait, now you got to pay for this. So yeah, one thing that I really wanted to get behind is transparency.

[Liz Theresa]

Yes.

[Jennifer Grace]

So we are like, this is what it costs. And there will be no upselling whatsoever. Like what you see is what you get.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah.

[Jennifer Grace]

So I'd rather have a bigger number that like, you know, and then \$20,000 later, and two years later, people are really disappointed and upset. Yeah, I'm like, your book will be done in four months. It'll cost \$12,500.

And that is the end of the story.

[Liz Theresa]

You know, much better, though. I mean, like, because I think that would be daunting, especially like, let's say you are an entrepreneur, right? Like still, like you want to make an investment, but you can't have people keep chasing you for more money later, because then you're like, you go crazy.

[Jennifer Grace]

And the time thing was big for us, too. I mean, when I published with one of the big five, first, you got to get an agent, then then it takes 18 months, once you get an agent to get your book published. So you're looking at a two year path from when you finish your book to when it's published.

Yeah. And then, you know, with most other hybrid publishers, you're probably looking to six months to 18 months. I mean, because we take so little on, we turn the book around in four months of us, sometimes they take a little longer, because we're waiting for their changes, but we're ready.

Yeah. So we're a very quick turnaround.

[Liz Theresa]

I love that. Well, and I love the I love the transparency. I love the what you see is what you get.

I love all of that. Like, would you say like the people that end up coming to you? Like what is their goal with the book?

Is their goal with the book? Because I'm curious about what's what people's intentions are and what they dream. Is the goal like, I want to share my story?

[Jennifer Grace]

Or is Yeah, or is what I say? It's very different. Like from for our memoirists, I feel like a lot of them have gone through a lot of pain and purpose and want to share with the world how they got there to inspire others in and also to have their pain not to be in vain.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah.

[Jennifer Grace]

I also see businesses and entrepreneurs really wanting to not have to explain what they do. You know, instead, just like, here's my book, like, Ron's a great example, you know, he's been so successful in not only real estate, but also Hollywood and Wall Street. And like, he he has his like, friends all the time calling him and say, Could you talk to my son?

He just graduated college. So now he's gonna go here, read my book. So I think Ron was coming from that place.

But also like he's got four kids, and he wanted to, you know, pass his legacy down to them. A lot of people come to us and say, I don't even care if it's just my kids that read this. And like, turning their life into their legacy.

Michael was very much like that Michael Conti, who wrote Route 80. You know, he was like, this is my life. This is my legacy.

I want my kids be in my grand kids and my great game grandkids to be able to read about where their great grandfather came from. So it's everything from that to, you know, incredible fiction writers, like our YA fiction writer, she did a historical fiction on, you know, horses and where they came from, from Spain to America. And it's just fascinating.

And she was that is interesting. Yeah, yeah. It's just different for everybody.

[Liz Theresa]

There's I love that.

[Jennifer Grace]

Yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, it sounds like you're so good at matching your personality to with like the right type of it sounds like it's more about like, it's the book has to be good, right?

[Jennifer Grace]

But it's like, the content has to be good.

[Liz Theresa]

Yes.

[Jennifer Grace]

The writing, the writing doesn't have to be the writer's got to be good, not great. That's our job.

I mean, even when I wrote *Directing Your Destiny*, I'm a really, really good writer.

Yeah. But I had two editors, I had a line editor, I had, you know, a content developmental editor. And it was just like, wow, you guys are really good.

Like, I thought it was a good writer. But like, holy shit, you know, so that's, it takes a village to bring a book out into the world. It's not a one man show.

Even if you're going to self publish, you you need, you know, your best friend who's an English teacher to read it and your friend's son who can do something on AI to do your book cover, like you're not going to be able to do it alone, you're gonna have to have help. So why not hire a team of professionals that can help you that are killer?

[Liz Theresa]

I think you'd be crazy not to. I mean, like, and I like that you know what you're getting.

[Jennifer Grace]

You know what I mean? And we're really flexible. Like if somebody wants to work with us, we have payment plans.

And you know, we make it really, really easy for people. And then of course, you know, Raven does book coaching, I do writers retreats, we have the quarterly book contest. And that one coming up in February, I'd love for your listeners to check it out.

It's ravenandgrace.com slash contest. And you can just enter to win, you know, a book deal with us and have a container. So we really try to be supportive for people in all different ways to get the book out of their heads and into the world.

[Liz Theresa]

I love it. So Jennifer, tell everybody where they can find you guys online, because I and a little bit more about the contest. Should you enter the contest if your book is not done?

[Jennifer Grace]

You can enter the contest if you just have an idea and you're okay. You can just if the book is halfway done, if you have an outline, if it's totally done, we have the stage of the book. So you get into the contest, we charge \$97 for the entry fee.

And all of February and March, you know, we'll be holding you accountable every you know, week, we have a two hour writing, you know, community writing time where we give a prompt, you do a little warm up right, and then you have an hour and a half to work on your book project. And then we all come in the end and say how many words we wrote. So Claire, our author hours and how many words we're going to write each week.

And at the end, you know, we're going to announce five of the best winners on the celebration call and one person's going to win the 12,500 call and then everybody does all the other four runners up, they do get a skip certificate towards a publishing deal with us to like I think we give like 3000 off for the runners up.

[Liz Theresa]

Amazing.

[Jennifer Grace]

It's so much fun. And it's just going to raven and grace.com to learn all about us. But you can directly go to raven and grace.com slash contest to learn more about our February contest.

[Liz Theresa]

Yes, you guys, all the links being the show notes. Jennifer, thank you so much for coming on today.

[Jennifer Grace]

Thank you so much, Liz. And I think you should join the contest. I'm gonna publish with us.

I bet you got a million books in your head. I really do.

[Liz Theresa]

Thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to subscribe and listen again later. Tell your friends leave a review because all of that helps me do all of this.

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