



Christopher Kenneally at PUBWEST interviewing Susan Daffron, CEO of Logical Expressions

KENNEALLY: Welcome to another edition of Beyond the Book. My name is Chris Kenneally. I'm the Director of Author Relations for Copyright Clearance Center, and very happy to welcome an author and publisher with a very interesting perspective on the new world of print on demand publishing. Welcome, Susan Daffron.

DAFFRON: Thanks. It's great to be here.

KENNEALLY: Susan, I could read three or four different bios for you. I mean, I'm looking at several of your books here. Susan Daffron is a former animal shelter volunteer veterinary technician and owner of six shelter critters. That's one bio. Susan Daffron and her husband James Byrd also own Logical Expressions Incorporated, and have helped many clients create business Websites in addition to their own series of award-winning, high-traffic content sites. They operate their business from their log home deep in the forests of Idaho. And, well, there's several more different bios of you. But why I thought we would want to chat today – and we've met at the Publishers Association of the West conference here in Portland – is some of the insights that you've garnered from personal experience about online publishing, selling of books online, but particularly making print on demand technology work for authors and for publishers. And I suppose the place to start is, give us an idea of your background, and what qualified you particularly – or what, I should say, prepared you for, you know, realizing the real potential of this new technology?

DAFFRON: Well, I actually have been in publishing in one way or another for a very long time, actually since about 1988. I originally did an internship at McCall's Magazine way back when, for those of you who remember McCall's Magazine. It subsequently died. That was very sad. But that led to using very, very early desktop publishing systems. I used PageMaker 1.0 on a Mac SE. For those of you also who are feeling rather antique, that's my background. That led to other graphic design jobs, other publishing jobs. I worked at a technical publishing company for a while, did all their books and newsletters. So I had a really good publishing background. And then, when we formed our business, one of the ways we've marketed ourselves, because we live in the middle of nowhere, is online. We really saw the power of the Internet to communicate with the rest of the world

outside of little tiny Sandpoint, Idaho, and so we wrote a lot of articles over time. People really responded to them, so we had this whole series of Websites, and they – and people told us that they enjoyed our writing, it was very clear, it gave them the information that they needed.

So once I learned a little bit about the way the publishing industry was going – I had bought Dan Poynter's *Self-Publishing Manual* like every other aspiring publisher. I bought it in 1996. Dan said I needed to print 10,000 books at a cost of, you know, \$12,000, and I thought, well, I'm not going to be a self-publisher. And only in around 2006 did I learn – did the technology really get to the point where you could produce a quality product that I felt good about. I mean, I actually did print on demand for the tech publisher I worked for. They did very, very early print on demand, the concept, using a Xerox DocuTech and putting their content into binders. So the idea was familiar to me many, many years before it came to the fore like it is now. And once I learned about Lightning Source and their distribution network, I realized that I could start a publishing company and take all of this years and years of writing and put it into book form, because I had the ability to lay it out myself, because I have a graphic design background, I have InDesign. And I consulted with other people. I hired editors to make sure that my work was up to snuff, and put them out onto Lightning Source, and it's worked out. It's turned into a really great income stream, to the point that now we've written a book called *Publishize: How to Quickly and Affordably Self-Publish a Book that Promotes Your Expertise*, that actual explains our entire system, and how we can repurpose our content, produce books that are of high quality, and get them out using Internet marketing methods really affordably.

It's a – there's – in my mind, there's never been a better time to do this type of publishing. There's no waste. There's – we don't allow returns. So we basically have said, forget bookstores. People buy our books exclusively online from us, or through big sites like Amazon.com, and that's where people are shopping anyway. So I really view this as kind of the wave of the future.

KENNEALLY: Well, I have to tell you a joke I was told. I was in New York City about a week ago for a conference, and met a friend of mine from publishing. And he said, well, if you're going to speak, you're going to have to have something funny to say at the beginning, and so he said, so, the question – the riddle was, what did the bookstore clerk say to the customer? What the heck are you doing here?

DAFFRON: OK. Well, that's interesting. And I guess it's easy for me because I live in Sandpoint, Idaho which has exactly one bookstore, and let's just say it's not a Barnes and Noble. I love bookstores. I love to wander around them, peruse them. I am the biggest book nut you will ever find. I love to read. But I realize that that's not the reality of the world. Just because I love spending hours in a Barnes and Noble does not mean that that's where people are buying books, and particularly not nonfiction books. Our books are really targeted to people who have a problem, they need an answer, they want to spend \$20. And particularly in this type of

economy, instead of spending thousands of dollars hiring a consultant to explain what's wrong with your Website, you spend \$30 on our book *Web Business Success* and figure it out for yourself, because a lot of this stuff is not rocket science, but you really need something where all the information is together, and not fragmented the way it is on the Internet.

KENNEALLY: Well, let's pull this together for the people in our audience. Beyond the Book draws in freelance writers, academics, experts of a whole range of subjects, and they write, that's part of what they do. They either write for tenure, or they write for pay, or they write because they want to express their opinion or share their knowledge with other people. And so along the way, they've collected a quantity of material, which it may make sense to repurpose or recycle into a book. And I like those ideas. I mean you talked about being out in the woods somewhere. You probably have to be very careful what you drag in and what you get rid of, and really be very attentive to all of that, resources, and especially in an economic situation such as we're facing, all of these things become more important than ever. And so we've got material, it's there – and unlike regular publishing, where you create a book and you do the marketing and the research after you've created this thing, this object happens and then you try to figure if anybody wants it – you've had your material online, you've recognized that there's an audience. People have responded to you. You have something to go on that says if, I make this a book, I'll have an audience.

DAFFRON: Exactly. That's really true. All of our books really started out first as e-mail newsletters, and then those articles went out in the newsletter, then were posted on websites – they're still on Websites. They get – I always say Google is like our friend, because we have such traffic on our content Websites, and those articles – the reality of doing a newsletter is that you kind of write about what you feel like that week, and – but obviously themes come up, and those articles, once compiled together – we basically, I think there's such a thing as a book, or a book – I don't know how you would say this, but a blog that's been turned into a book. We kind of did that, because our content sites used what you could refer to as early blog software, although that we didn't call it blog software. It's a content management system that has our articles on it. And the – much like people are now thinking, wow, I've written all these blog entries, I could turn it into a book. We thought of that a long time ago, and we actually have a software program that we wrote called IdeaWeaver, which is a program that helps you compile a whole lot of different information, and it's very modular, so you can rearrange your ideas and then put it into an outline and see where the holes are, and then you can fill in the holes. And that's exactly how I wrote our books, and that's how I've written them quite so – really so quickly. I mean, granted, there was a lot of articles, article fodder that I could recycle from, but obviously there's going to be holes, because I writing them not in sequence like you would a normal book, where you decide, I'm going to this outline, and I'm going to start at the beginning. Well, I just wrote what I felt like, and so there's going to be holes.

So for example, with my pet care book, I loaded it all into IdeaWeaver. I saw where the holes were, and then I just started writing. Then, the way IdeaWeaver works, it – you export it to Microsoft Word, and then I laid it out in InDesign, which is a professional level layout program. So it's virtually indistinguishable from a – any other professionally produced book.

KENNEALLY: Well, I think that sounds like to me like the real helpful aspect of this is that you've systematized the process, and that then makes it so much easier for someone to come to it and not have to learn how to publish a book. They can have it happen – not that it's magical, but that by systematizing, you've streamlined it and created efficiencies. You've made how many books in how many months? It's quite a number.

DAFFRON: We created – it was eight books in 18 months, and we just produced our ninth book. So the whole process of becoming a publishing company – we decided three years ago that we were going to add publishing to our business model, so then we – and when we decided that, we thought, if we can figure this out, then we're going to write the book that explains how we did it. And so we did exactly that. We produced eight books in 18 months, and just last week, I came out with the book *Publishize: How to Quickly and Affordably Self-Publish a Book that Promotes Your Expertise*. And that is sort of the culmination of that three-year plan to take all this content and repackage it into books.

KENNEALLY: There are other services out there. A lot of companies have tried to offer to the would-be author a package that gets their book published. What, though, are you offering that's different do you think?

DAFFRON: Well, for our clients, we also help, in addition to publishing our own books and being a small press, we do help other people get their books out of their head and into print. The difference between us and essentially a subsidy press is that we're more like a book packager, in that we help walk people through the process. They get their own ISBNs. They're the publisher of record. There's no question that we don't own any of the rights. They own all their content. They're their books, and it's their company. We just help with really their – help them with the layout – do it themselves, or help them with cover design layout, just getting them from a whole bunch of ideas – our IdeaWeaver software – actually, a lot of people – actually, it's been used a lot in the educational realm, too, because a lot of kids, even kids – and another thing that was really fascinating, I just heard from someone who was working with someone who was learning disabled, and had issues with organizing their ideas into essentially an outline, and that's what this software does for people. And I think that that's why – that's one of the places where would-be authors often get stuck. They end up – they have all these wonderful ideas, and they just can't put them together into something that is as concrete and streamlined as a book, because a book has to flow from point A to point B to point C, and even if you have a lot of great ideas, if you can't get them into that form, then you're never going to have a publishable book.

KENNEALLY: Right. Well, so if I've got material and I were able to take advantage of the tips and the systematization that you offer, how quickly could I have a book online and ready for purchase from Amazon, say?

DAFFRON: Well, if you really had a whole lot of the content, really less than a month, probably. Actually, for example – I mean, if you really had everything – you know, a manuscript ready to go – in fact, my *Publishize* book, I – let's just say I expedited the production of that because I wanted to bring it to this publishing show. I mean, this is the audience, you know? And I had many of the articles – about a month ago I realized, I'm really close, and I had many of the articles. I put the whole thing into IdeaWeaver. I rearranged it, wrote the fillers that needed to be done, exported it, sent it to an editor, laid it out, did the index in InDesign, and then uploaded PDFs to Lightning Source last week, approved the proof on Tuesday and shipped some to Portland, and they got here yesterday.

KENNEALLY: Today is Friday. So that was Tuesday, and they got here on Thursday.

DAFFRON: Yeah, it – well, last Tuesday. There's about a week of shipping. I mean, we've got to give – be far here to Lightning Source. They did a good job.
(laughter)

KENNEALLY: Well, that's a terrific story, an inspiring one, because I know there are many people who, as I say, as a result of the work they do, know they have material for a book, but can't dedicate themselves to some of the grunt work, if you will, of pulling it all together. And if you're offering a way to get there faster – and in a way, I mean, I'm looking at these books – these are books that would do well in any bookstore if you chose to put them there. And let me ask you one last question, Susan. As much as it's an online world, as much as – you know form factors now run the gamut from the laptop to the iPhone, having a book is still an important thing, right?

DAFFRON: Oh, I believe so. Absolutely. A book gives you a level of credibility that – for example, many – in the online world, many people say write an e-book, write an e-book. I say, no. Do a print book, because a print book – people can hold a print book. That has a huge amount of value. Even if they never read it, it's a perception. Print books are – in fact, I was talking to another person who does layout here at the show, and she said, one of the things that's really great – we both had done newsletters in the past as far as graphic design, and she said, one of the things is that, with a book, people keep it. When we were doing newsletters, it's like, you know they're half of them are going to be circular filed. And the same thing is true with Websites, if you're doing Website design, you know. One delete key later, you've got a different Website. And a book has a level permanence, and that's why I believe that print books are not going to go away, much as I believe that people – the Kindle is a wonderful thing, and e-books will evolve – print books are not going to go away. I still love going to the library. Many people love just

sitting and curling up with a book. You can't curl up with a Kindle. I'm sorry.
(laughter)

KENNEALLY: Well, you know, and it also is very hard indeed to throw away a book. Maybe because I'm an author, the idea of throwing away a book is almost like abandoning children or something like that. You just can't do it. Susan Daffron with *Logical Expressions*, and the author of *Publishize* and many other books – *Happy Hound*, *Happy Tabby*, *Web Business Success* – thank you very much indeed for joining me.

DAFFRON: Thanks, Chris, this has been great.

KENNEALLY: And we will do some more interviews here from the Publishers Association of the West conference in Portland, Oregon. Please join us again on *Beyond the Book*. Thank you for joining us.

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