



Publish Your Purpose Podcast Episode 6

Jenn: All right Mark. We are back to another episode of the Podcast. And for those watching we have a special guest. Say Hello Fern.

Fern: Hi.

Jenn: We have Fern Pessin with us here. We actually talked about you in one of our episodes. I noticed a theme that some of that PDP team has previously been to the Author Academy themselves. I feel like that's such a great value and benefit to who you work with. Because you know all of my rhyme and reason. Whether may or may not make sense, at least you know it and understand it.

We wanted to bring you on today because you and Mark are working so close together. I want to just get a sense of what that looks like. You're so entrenched in helping Mark in the planning process (and doing so many other things.)

Mark, I want to throw it to you so you can properly introduce Fern and your relationship.

Mark: Thank you. Well, we've been talking a lot about the Academy and planning and vision and mind mapping and, so far so good. I can do this. I'm going to nestle back, I'm going to get comfortable. Nope. That didn't work. That whole thing just flipped right over like an apple cart. I started to freak out. I had all these beautiful mind-maps. They weren't for any art galleries, that's for sure, but in my mind, they were beautiful. But now, the next task was to develop the outline. In the meantime, Jenn has already told you that, I have a job, I have a pretty active life, like a lot of authors. I started to freak out. I just sent a nice email to Jenn. "You know this isn't working for me. I am not going to be able to do this." We had an opportunity to collaborate and Jenn just called me on the carpet and said "All right, what's going on? What's wrong?" I laid it out there that I got the mind mapping done, and I got this inventory but it was just an organized mess. I have no idea where this is going. Holding true to my commitment in my contract to myself, I know that I have (or want to have) my manuscript done in fourteen weeks. That's why I'm in the Author's Academy.

Anyway, Jenn took all that information and said "hang on a minute. Let me get back to you. Let me come up with a couple of different strategies, a couple of different plans, and I'll get back to you." Well, right away Jenn brought me back a proposal and it was evident that I needed some help. If I was going to get this done and stick to my plan, I needed some help. She recommended, "I'd like to introduce you to Fern." Boy, am I glad. I am so lucky. I am so honored.



Fern and I talked on, I'll never forget it... I was on my way to Savannah, and I was driving along. I said "okay, I've got time now. I can just put the phone on and talk with Fern and actually strategize as to what exactly was it that Fern could do for the Served in Silence project. Well we hit it off! We hit it off so well that I almost ran out of gas. I had to wake up Mr. Wonderful next to me. "You've got to find a gas station!" Anyway, fast forward to finally strategize a plan, got together an idea. Since I was on my way to Savannah that first time, I regularly go there, Fern and I decided, why don't we get together and meet in Savannah? I've got to do things a little over the top, so it's got to have a name. Gotta put a name on the top, so, I named it the Spark Conference.

I left [Atlanta], I packed up my suitcase with all of my notes, all of my napkins and my stickies, and my mind maps and everything I had learned so far up to that point in the Academy. Away I go. On my way to Savannah for the Spark Conference. I'll turn it back over to you Jenn and that's kind of where we were in the planning process.

Jenn: I want to know, because I feel like it may not be super clear at this point, what was your expectation in working with Fern? And then Fern, after Mark answers, what was your expectation of him during the Spark conference?

Mark: We didn't meet, we collided! We just chatted. We were just old friends right away. I'm running out of gas on the highway on the way there. After the phone call, I still had a good distance to go to get to Savannah and we hung up and before I got to Savannah, Fern had already sent me an email. And in the email, it was boom, boom, boom... "This is what I heard. This is what we have to do. Here's my recommendation. What do you think?" I was blown away. Because right away I saw this person clearly is an active listener. Because she listened to the minute details; she listened to the big picture. She also listened to meeting my dreams of what I wanted for the success of the book to be. And was able to take all of that and put it into a very succinct email back to me. And I knew from that moment on, that Fern was going to be pivotal; going to be an essential part to help me get organized with all these pieces of paper.

Jenn: How about you Fern? What were you thinking? How was the Spark Conference going to go down in your mind?

Fern: Well, I know Mark has tons of energy so I had to take it down a little on my end because normally I can be really energetic. But we would explode... literally have sparks all over the place if we both did our normal stuff. I was hoping that he would come with all of his materials and that we would have a chance for me to understand the vision, the bigger picture, of the whole book. And what he wanted to do with the book. Where in the world was this book going to go? Is this something he wanted for himself, for a speaking tour, to give to friends, or did he really want it to go big. We came away with, "It should be a movie!"



Mark: That's really big!

Fern: So we just went all over the place! But we got also very pinpointed and we came away with probably the longest outline I've ever written for a project, because there were so many great stories. Over the time that we spent together I actually heard Mark's whole life from birth through now. It was a lot. But we got through so much, so quickly. I think we both kept each other to targets. We started when we said we were going to start. We took breaks so that we could re-charge. We stopped when we said we were going to stop. The wall looked like a fall collage with colors. It looked like giant tree with leaves all over the place.

We had sections of the book planned out. We had chapters planned out. We had all the characters planned; which of the pieces were going to talk to the authenticity piece. So, there's a story to be told but there's, like a fairy tale, there's a moral and a purpose behind this. It's not like just "Oooh look at me, I've had a bizarre life, isn't that fun?", or "I've had a fabulous life." Or "I had a sucky life." It's like we wanted to communicate a mission. I say "we" because Mark and I truly are partners in this now. And what he wants is what I... we're doing it together. I think that's helping because he doesn't mind me saying "I don't think that speaks to what we want." And I don't mind him saying "Oh no; we can't say that! That's my mother! Don't say that!"

It's a good collaboration. When you collaborate with somebody who is on the same wavelength, it really, I think, adds to the value of the finished product. Hopefully, by the time the book gets to the editing process with you Jenn, it should be in pretty good shape.

Jenn: That's what we're hoping for. That's why you're around. To help the author who has all these different ideas. I think the energy level between the collective three of us could cause an explosion if we were all on at the same time! There's no doubt about that. But, with that energy comes, sometimes, not for everybody, like a disorganization. Where you're moving so fast. I know for me personally, I've been called the Tasmanian Devil more than once where I just roll on in. All the shit's flying. And then I put it back together. So, before something, at least in my process, let's just use cleaning the kitchen for example. To clean the kitchen, it starts with "I'm just going to clean the counter." And all of a sudden, all the appliances are off the counters. I am not under the counters. I'm ripping up floor boards. It's serious levels of craziness. And it's a complete disaster BUT, it ensures that when it gets put back together, that every friggin' speck of that kitchen is spotless. And now, it's kind of the same when it comes to writing; getting this done.

I almost imagine, I wasn't there... I was able to chime in and see you two in action for a brief moment. But was there a sense of chaos at any point where you're "what am I going to do with all of these friggin' sticky notes? We have them everywhere!" How do you take that, two people with really high energy, and bring it down to the tactics of "We



need to focus. We need to take this off the wall and figure out how to make it into an outline.”

Mark: I think I’ll answer first. Yes. It was chaotic as hell. There were notes flying. I took the artwork down off the walls. Fern had me putting giant post it notes up on the wall and she would write, on color coded sticky notes, and say “put that over there, put that one there.” It was very, very chaotic at first. But it was good though. I felt that I actually had, for the first time, somebody that actually was the conductor on this crazy ass ride of mine. We were sticking to the agenda. We were sticking to the outcomes and deliverables. It seemed very chaotic to me, but I trusted it. I was like “Hey, it’s okay. It’s chaotic for now, but I don’t know…” I think I do that a lot. I displace my concerns. “I’ll put that back over in Jenn’s lap.” “That’s over in Fern’s lap now. I don’t have to worry about it. They can worry about it.”

Was it chaotic for you?

Fern: No. Not at all. I actually felt the opposite. Because I put my director’s hat on. This isn’t my life. I’m here to understand what you’re trying to say. My notes were very targeted. Where everything went was very clear to me. But that’s what happens. When you’re so buried in yourself, in your story and what you’re trying to say, it’s really hard to take that step back and look at it and say “Oh, that makes sense.” Because once we got all the little post-its up on the wall, it made perfect sense to me. And then I was like “Mark, go for a run. Do whatever you want.” And I took all those post-it notes and turned them into an outline. I went through the sections. And then I said “We’re missing this. We need this. I don’t understand that.” And you explained. And we were able to fill that all in. I think it made it much easier to do the rest of the book.

What we’ve been working on since then, is taking everything we did on those two days and filling it in. We might have had a naked tree, but now we have a blooming forest.

Mark: For sure.

Fern: To stick with the same analogy. I mean, it’s nice. There are still pieces missing but we are so far, in my opinion, so far along.

Jenn: Do you have any insights or tips for someone who’s watching this? They may not have the means or the resources or they may not be in the Academy, or maybe they’re afraid to reach out to us, and to you. Do you have some kind of tip how someone might be able to tackle a little portion of what the two of you did together in that Spark conference?

Because what you do is magical to me. I feel like I’m the conductor, the maestro, where I’m grabbing all of the moving parts as the publisher. “He needs her, and this, and this, and this is when we have to do it.” And I’m the one that’s “All right! Chop, Chop. We



said this was the deadline! Let's go." But I feel like, to me, what you're doing and what an editor does, is the hardest part of the process. The hardest part on the author. I think it's just the hardest job, generally speaking. To me, being the publisher is a heck of a lot easier than being an editor. The editor, I'm sure, would completely reverse that and disagree.

But, do you have any sensible wisdom that you might be able to impart that could help somebody maybe take that next action step? I think people get frozen.

Fern: I work with a writer's group because I too am a writer, so one of the best pieces of advice that I got, just two weeks ago, but I already knew it, you have to write an outline. If you have an outline your story doesn't wind up in the wrong place. Sometimes, if you just start... "Okay I'm going to start at birth and go until today and I'm going to write my story," if you're writing something that is biographical. But if there's a purpose for your book and what you're trying to accomplish, then that's where you really start. I would first of all, create (which is what Mark and I did), we created a mission and we created a vision, for the book. And we talked about what do you want to do with this? So you have some idea of maybe how to position the content, to help you accomplish your goal.

And then the next thing I would do is figure out, is this something that can be told in a chronological order? Or is something that needs to be told in a geographical order? Is it something based on a series of simultaneous events? And then, what makes the most sense? Then, once you figure that out, that's the sections of your book. And then figure out what has to go in each part.

For example, in one of the books I worked on with one of your authors, they just had a lot of anecdotes they needed to put in around some content. Then you just figure out all your anecdotes, what do those anecdotes say and which one does it go to? You might have sections based on content topic, and then what needs to go in there. Once you're done with the outline, then you can start filling it in. As you suggested, we've been using Scrivener to break it down into small parts so that if you're halfway through and you decide "Oooh, those aren't in the right sections! We need to put it in a different section," then you can move all the pieces.

Jenn: In our last episode we talked about mind mapping. The mind mapping is the stage before the outline. That's really what you were doing at the Spark Conference. Just for clarity. As really big picture mind mapping, war room style, stuff all over the walls. Figuring it out.

Fern: Exactly.

Jenn: And then you, as part of the team, then took that To Do item off of Mark's plate and then you created the outline itself to then begin populating it.



Fern: And the Table of Contents actually. We had enough to do that. Now it's just putting the pieces in, with the understanding that if it flows better, we might need to change stuff.

Jenn: Trying to figure out how to ask my question succinctly... You now have the outline. The Spark Conference was not too long ago, but long enough that you've both been like plod along here, getting the outline input. What has that process been like for both of you? Mark, I don't know if you want to start, with having that clarity of this is the outline. This is the benefit to me of having the outline. And this is how I'm able to populate it because it's so clear. How's that process been?

Mark: It was amazing. Like what Fern was talking about, we kind of had everything done. It was a flurry of activity and sticky notes going everywhere. And then it was like someone shut the fan off. She was right "You need to go away. Go run. Go see your friends. I need to work for a little while."

It was in July, so it was really, really hot in Savannah and I would have to remember that if I ever have the two of you together in one room, both of you would be under blankets because both of you are cold, always looking for the blanket.

Sure enough, I'm like "that's it, we're done." And I look back and Fern's in her room all snuggled, writing away. So I go for a run. That was the first time, during that run, that I felt so relieved and I felt so comfortable and proud of the fact that it's good. What we have is okay, it's good. From that Spark conference, we both left and came back to our homes, it has been a very compass driven road map, that's now able (I did my homework; did my homework assignments for Fern; you will get this done; you will have this done and have it back to me, because if you don't, then I can't, and so on) and I work very well like that. It's really been comforting.

And it's also a confidence builder to know that somebody else is in your corner and you can bounce things off of. Even when, earlier in an episode I was talking about the doubt demons, "I'm really having a hard time today" and I don't feel ashamed. I can just text Fern and say "Oh Girl, this is not working today and..." I think you guys play this out and talk secretly amongst yourselves, because you let me ramble for a few minutes and then "Okay, are you done now?" "We have to get working."

Jenn: Chop, Chop

Mark: So we left there... we had the outline done. The Table of Contents done. And I remember calling Mr. Wonderful. And like, "Wow, It's really getting real now. I mean there's been different stages of realness, but this is really, really getting real." It's been a remarkable experience. Very laser focused. "We are not dealing with anything but the Early Years, Segment 3." "Go, get it done". And that boom, boom, boom.



And Scrivener (for those of you that don't know, it's an organizational tool, that was introduced during the Academy) is a great way to take all those index cards we talked about earlier, and you place them out there on the outline. It's an electronic way of placing them all out on your table. And that also has been a tool that Fern can say to me, "Go to Scrivener; look in this; and here's your assignment for today. These three cards have to be filled out." And so, it's a process. It's the process that we've developed and it's going to get us from draft to manuscript in fourteen weeks!

24:16 - Commercial

Fern: I think that's important, what you just said. That's the process we used; this is the way that you work. I think that's my job is to be able to understand the best way to get what needs to be gotten from you, based on how you work best. Knowing your military background, and precision, and deadlines and "stick to the script", we can play all you want and text messages and chit chat and whatever, but when it comes to the work, we have to get the work done. The deadlines came from you (and from Jenn), so there's a framework, a timeline and you work backward from that. How much do we have to get done?

The hardest part Mark, I think for you, is when we left Spark and you had nothing to do because I had your briefcase with 8,000 different little pieces of paper, that were like, some made sense, some made no sense at all and it was my job to take all of that and put it into order, into the outline. To say "okay we have this piece, we have this piece, we have this piece, we're missing this piece. Mark, go write this piece." That may be a little bit of the Sherpa in me. But it's also more of the ghost writer side. Which not everyone needs the ghost writing part. Some people just have a lot of stuff and need to put it in order. It depends on the person. Everything can change and evolve and customize based on somebody's style. That's important. You have to know your own style before you start working.

Jenn: I want to ask you, speaking of styles... I wanted to be really clear, if someone is watching this, I don't want them to be really intimidated by how crazy type A we all are. I personally work best with people who are Type A, who are driven, who just really need the tools and resources and they're like "just send me on my way – Go" But that does not mean that we don't work with people who are not that way. Plenty of people that fall into a different bucket where they're a little more relaxed about it vs. being really timeline driven. And that's totally fine. There's really no right or wrong way. But Fern, speaking of styles, I'm curious in your experience. I know that there's another author that you've worked with of ours... in terms of stylistic differences... not in them as personalities, more so what you've been doing for their work. You just started talking about ghost writing a little bit. I feel like with this other manuscript there was definitely a component of that to it. Can you just compare a little bit more so if somebody is just thinking "wow,



I'm not like Mark; I don't have a suitcase full of stuff. I need help getting to the stuff." What does that look like?

Fern: Some people might say that I'm ADD because I'm all over the place with different kinds of things that I do. What I'm doing for Mark is because that's what's comfortable for Mark and that's what he needs. For the other author that you sent my way, she had a bunch of anecdotes and interviews that she needed to have to support a thesis that she was basically putting forth, and those stories had to be more conversational in nature, more narrative, novel-ly, kind of stories rather than technical writing. I did that part for her, so she could do her specialty which was talking about the research and everything that had been done. I hope that it kind of brought the book into a place where both professionals and the lay person could read it and understand what she was trying to say. That's what I hope. But that's what she needed. So that's what I did.

I have another person who has been writing journals for thirty-five years and she wants them made into a book for her family. It's not for publication. It's for her family. But she's so afraid of what's in there because she hasn't read them for 35 years. She doesn't know what her kids are going to read about her life and her family and all that. I'm helping her work through that. That's a very low pressure, no deadline (she took the summer off to be with her kids) kind of thing.

One other person (I met through you, in class), just needs someone to take the information she already wrote and turn it into articles that she can submit to other publications to promote her speaking career. We're having a lot of fun with that. We're tweaking them all. I enjoy doing it. I'm learning stuff... I said "Guess what I learned in this article today... I wrote it but I just learned it today!" Sharing that with other people.

Each of these people have totally different styles. If somebody needs more of a hand holding situation, they're not good with "go do that", then we can work with that, but it's going to take a different amount of time to get the stuff done and that's where the outline comes in and backing out from that with deadlines.

Mark: You can see Jenn, where it got. I could see when I kept asking you, "well, who is Fern? What does she do?" "Just talk to her Mark, Just go talk to her." After the Spark conference, with all of those great qualities, you know Fern, you really are a manuscript strategist. You take a look and you can jump in wherever the author is in their journey, to help fill the void, bridge the gap, and that really does help you get the creative juices flowing to continue to write.

Jenn: What happens behind the scenes is that I know, I'm listening to you and where you're having trouble and your troubling points, and before we hit record you said something about having a therapist. I jokingly say (and I have this now on the website), the PDP team serves three separate roles. It's first and foremost the strategist, so in this case Fern



being the manuscript strategist. I, more so from the publishing side, big picture strategist, however we're also you're cheerleaders. We're here to give the boost when you need the boost. When you're down, we'll pick you up and shove you out. And then we're also therapists. Disclaimer here – we're not licensed therapists. We do act with a very listening ear and a compassionate ear to hear where our authors could be falling apart. Because I feel like the whole publishing process is just a can of worms to let out all kinds of emotions you did not know you had or they've been buried for decades. We're here to listen to where we can push you outside of your comfort zone. When I can shove you out of the nest and let you fly. Or when I have to drop down and save you from falling out of the nest. There's a lot of different times when there's a whole array of all of that happening at once.

When you reached out it was kind of like an SOS. "I need help! I know I need somebody else that's going to help take this forward." And I say, "go talk to Fern" without giving you a lot of details, intentionally, because Fern is an active listener. She's listening to what you're saying, differently than how I would. Then the two of us are chatting in the background saying "All right, how can we help him? What is going to be his best avenue for success?" And that means this, this, and this in terms of a plan. And so, I think one of the challenges with working with other types of publishers is that they're not really thinking about all of those pieces. They're putting you through a very rigorous regimented program where there's no flexibility. Versus us where we're thinking "Mark needs it this way, vs. these other couple of authors where they needed it slightly tweaked this way." That to me feels like part of our magic, in terms of making your chances of success that much higher as an author.

Mark: I totally agree. What came to mind right away is that it was a specialized, individualized attention but a 360 review. And took that and everybody that I've met at PDP has... we'll get Lisa on here too. Just what Lisa brought to helping the process along. Realizing this isn't easy. Some of these things that you are ripping that Band-Aid off and Fern knew it too. There were a couple of times we had to pause for a second and make some iced tea. "Are you okay with this?"

When I was interviewing, or looking at publishers, [slapped hand together]
"How many words is it? How many words can we get out of this?"
And I'm like "Do you want to know what the book's about?"
"No"
"How many words is it? How many words is it?"

They weren't going to be for me. Because it was much more involved than 25,000 or 50,000 words. There's a lot that goes into it. And that's where Fern has really helped with the strategy and helping develop the strategy. Not just making the strategy for you. It was "What do you think? Let me show you, let me tell you, what do you think about this?" And then helping you make the strategy.



Jenn: I remember you saying in our first phone call, Mark. I know that you vividly remember our first call. I remember it vividly because it happened to on a Saturday morning. My house can be a little chaotic with kids on a Saturday morning so I was out sitting in my car. I'm always in the car. Not even driving. Just sitting in the passenger seat in my driveway! It's my spot.

I remember you saying that you talked to a publisher and they didn't even ask you what the topic was, they were more concerned about the word count. This is exactly why I started this company. The author needs to be cared for and is not just a number. It's not a numbers game to me. It's not how many people can we turn out this year to find the one that's going to hit big. Everyone here has equal support, equal meaning to all of us on a very personal level.

We've talked about Lisa in every episode to date. Fern you've been in most of them too. And Lisa's role in all of this too is so important. She's a coach. She is plugged into the process so from the kick-off call which we'll be having soon, and we're documenting this journey, you have Lisa there who is also the one to be your therapist, your strategist and your cheerleader. She's also there to support you, in addition to me, in addition to Niki and Heather and Fern, so it's like you get a whole team, a family. Happens to be a very female dominated family at the moment, but here we are...

Fern, do you have any parting thoughts that you might share to the person who's listening or watching us and thinking like "I'm still on the fence." However many episodes listening to these two yammer on about this process, but I still don't know if this is right for me... what would you say to that person?

Fern: I would say look ahead five years from now and see where you want to be. Do you still want that pile of information to sit on your desk or do you want it out there to share with other people? And if your vision for your life is to get that done, whether it's your bucket list "I have to write a book before I die" or whether it's "my business is going to improve exponentially if I have this book which makes me more of a recognized expert", whatever the reason. That's why you got here to the first place. If you're watching these videos you've obviously thought about doing something with writing. I say go for it!

Jenn: Giving permission, as we've talked about in a previous episode. We are now, the three of us, giving you permission to go forth and do something with this.

Fern: Right. And if a book feels too overwhelming "OMG how do I get 80,000 words out of a piece of scrap paper I wrote at a restaurant", then think about doing an article. Start with an article about it. And if the article gets good feedback for example, then maybe I'll write a brochure or maybe I'll write a mini-book, or an e-book. If that works, then maybe I'm ready for a full book. But most of the people that come to Purpose Driven Publishing



have a message. They're trying to communicate with the world. If you're only one person with that message and you're not the head of a big organization with lots of money, then how does one person get that out in a way that doesn't eliminate their family, their lives, taking care of themselves, all of that. As people have always said to me, you need to do something where if you're sick, you still have money coming in. So this is something that goes on beyond you. For me it's sort of big picture – when I leave this earth, what have I left? What have I shared? What have I taught? But that's just me.

Jenn: I think that thinking about your role in this, my role in this, while they're different, they're equally valuable. To me, I think about my legacy now (I've written my own books) but I think of my legacy as associated with every person that we publish. And that's really friggin' incredible. Because that will live well beyond. If we, you know Fern, if you and I can get Mark to the finish line... Think of what the world would be without hearing your story Mark. I do think that the timeliness of your story, which is just coincidental, not strategic in any way, it just happens to be coincidental. Your story is going to impact so many people which is ultimately what we've set out to do. Impact the lives of people. And here we are doing it. Whoo Hoo.

Mark: Pretty amazing.

Jenn: Pretty awesome.

Mark: I tell you Jenn all the time, I don't know if I've shared it with you Fern, but this really is game changing for the *Served in Silence* project. But, it's been incredible in my house. It's also life changing for Aaron and I. This really has been an incredible, incredible, experience.

Fern: I bet he didn't know your whole life story as well as I do now! (laugh)

Mark: (Laughing) You're probably right!!! Ah ha ha ha.

Jenn: That's the other secret we can mention, is that the author/publisher relationship... we know ALL of your baggage. All of it.

Mark: Exactly! Yeah!

Jenn: And it stays with us. It's just what we do.

Fern: Right. Confidential.

Jenn: You tell us. It stays with us. And the rest goes to the world.



I feel like this was such an awesome episode. I'm so happy Fern that you were able to join us and fit us into your schedule. I know the two of you after this are off to do another iteration of Spark. Is this one Ignite?

Mark: This is Ignite.

Jenn: Good. Good. We'll have to record a future episode that actually shares what Ignite was and how it went.

Mark: Absolutely. You got it.

Jenn: Thank you both. I'll talk to you both soon.

Fern,

Mark: Bye.

[Music and end commercial]