

#135 The Collective Book Studio - Collaborative Publisher An...

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SPEAKERS

Michelle Glogovac, Angela Engel

M Michelle Glogovac 00:08

You're listening to the mind simplified life podcast and this is episode number 135. Welcome to the my simplified life podcast, a place where you will learn that your past and even your present. Don't define your future. Regardless of what stage of life you're in, I want you to feel inspired and encouraged to pursue your dreams, simplify your life and start taking action today. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac, and I'm excited to share my stories and life lessons with you while taking you on my own journey. This is my simplified life. Hey, friends, welcome back to another episode. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac. Now, you know, I have an obsession with authors. And I am learning all I can about the publishing world as I'm writing my book. And we know there's self publishing. And we know there's traditional publishing. But there's also a version of hybrid publishing, where you, the author invest a portion of finances, along with a publisher, and you work collaboratively. So today, my guest is Angela Engel, who is the founder and CEO of the collective book studio. She's a collaborative publisher, this means that she works with you in publishing your book. She's also a mom of three girls, is doing all of this in her work while being a mother. And we are going to discuss what that kind of looks like, and what balance means to both of us. And here's the hint. There's no such thing. Today, you're going to learn about what collaborative book publishing means, what it looks like, what kind of investment you should be considering if this is the route that you're going to go in. But then also just what the book publishing industry looks like, as a whole, and why the changes have been coming around that we've seen. We also flashback to what some bookstores used to look like. And I giggled when she mentioned one in particular. So see if you can catch it. This is a great honest conversation, for you to listen to, if you're thinking about writing a book and looking to figure out how you're going to get it out into the world. So enjoy this chat I had with Angela, and all of the information you're going to learn because it's certainly an educational interview.

A Angela Engel 02:41

Hi, Angela. Hi, Michelle. It's great to be here. Yes.

M

Michelle Glogovac 02:46

I'm so excited to chat with you a fellow Bay Area, a book lover, and a mom, can you take a moment to introduce yourself to everyone, please?

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Angela Engel 02:56

Hi, I am Angela Engel, the publisher and founder of the collective book studio. I have a 20 plus career in book publishing in the sales marketing and business development side. And I live in the Bay Area and a mom of three girls.

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Michelle Glogovac 03:12

Three girls, are they they're not? Right.

A

Angela Engel 03:16

I actually do have one. She's about to be in ninth grade next year, and a fourth grader and a girl that's just finishing kindergarten.

M

Michelle Glogovac 03:26

All such different ages. I'm a stepmom and my my stepkids are 23 and 20. So I'm now on my second round of like going through all of the grace changes, since I have a seven year old. Yeah, it's interesting.

A

Angela Engel 03:44

Totally, it's there's definitely a wide range, but I love having a almost a 14 year old girl like in a week and six year old, it's, you know, I never knew how blessed I would be like I didn't kind of honestly plan that many at that age difference. And yet, it's so wonderful, honestly to have the help.

M

Michelle Glogovac 04:04

Yes, yeah. And see ours are 12 months and three weeks apart, and we didn't plan that aged. Oh, my. But yeah, it's it's great because they're like, built in best friends. And, you know, they did everything together. So it's nice how it's funny how it turns out the way you didn't.

A

Angela Engel 04:25

Always right, always

Always right, always.

M

Michelle Glogovac 04:27

Yes. So can we talk about your career because you now own your own company. But you worked for others before?

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Angela Engel 04:35

Yeah. Yeah, I had a really blessed career. I feel like and I still am blessed. Right out of college. I'm a University of Oregon grad. I'm a duck. I comparative lit major and creative writer and I came to the San Francisco Bay Area and I applied for an assistant marketing job at a publishing company in Berkeley. It was a large job. tribution company now that's bought by Ingram. So if people are familiar with any sort of the book publishing world would kind of know. They're like one of the largest now, distributors of books in the country, if not worldwide. So it was a really great, exciting time. This was over 20 years ago. And there wasn't where there was like this boom of self publishing, there was something you know, Amazon was a book retailer just much as Walden Pond at the mall. And there was New York Times bestsellers, like the Four Agreements, which I was on the marketing team for the power of now. You know, when 911 hit, it was seven stories had a book by Noam Chomsky called 911. So it's a really exciting time for independent publishing. And that's sort of what I got to grow up, grow up hit in here in the Bay Area.

M

Michelle Glogovac 05:52

Isn't that funny? You mentioned things that I totally forgot about, like going to the bookstore at the mall, Walden. And the Amazon actually was a bookseller. At one point, they didn't just deliver your groceries or clothes within 24 hours. It's definitely interesting how it's all turned around. And now we see more self publishing. Why do you think we see more self publishing? Because it's just that much harder to get an actual deal?

A

Angela Engel 06:19

That is, like such a multi layered? Good question. I think it really I think it really depends on the category that you're publishing in. I think that there has been a first of all, honestly, there's just too many books being published. I mean, I think there was like a statistic with all the the self publishing a million books were published in the last year. And, you know, I think that there is a backlash of people feeling shut out debut authors, new voices, how hard it is to build your platform, you basically have to be a politician or a celebrity to get published or have this huge platform, you don't necessarily have to be a writer, you can, you know, these large, these large celebrities, you know, obviously there's a ghostwriter involved and everything else. So I think that that is part a frustration. That definitely happened. I think self publishing, is a business and Amazon was able to seize that business, right? It's a tech platform, and they're looking at technology. And if you think about the way technology and social media have really boomed,

right? All of the ways that even our own print magazines are now really focused on the digital component. Media. So books have gotten there are two, right? I think the danger of self publishing is the lack of quality control.

M Michelle Glogovac 07:48

Yes, yes, I can. I'm one of those people who if I have to, if I'm reading your book, and I can see grammatical errors or edits, I would make him like, it's making it really tough to get to the next page. Because that's all that's on my mind. And if you're self publishing, you know, I think that people also don't realize how much time and money goes into it. To do it the right way.

A Angela Engel 08:15

Yeah, I mean, you know, I really, we get, you know, pitched all the time. And, you know, people like but I couldn't like self publish this. And I and I did I don't understand why it didn't really work. And we're like, Well, did you hire editor? They're like, well, I hired my brother to take a look at it. He's got an English degree, or my sister in law, or, you know, it's just like, No, you know, it's, I kind of almost think about this. You pay to get your nails done, you pay to get your hair done. Like, please pay at least minimum for an editor or a professional editor, and we'll look at your book.

M Michelle Glogovac 08:51

Yes. Three, keep preaching.

A Angela Engel 08:55

I'm good. Gosh, I mean, yeah, at least minimum, if you're self published, do that. And also a professional designer. Don't be like, Oh, I took a course and in college, and now I'm like, a book designer, and you kick because in on Amazon software, you can, like, you know, upload a PDF.

M Michelle Glogovac 09:14

It's cringe worthy, right.

A Angela Engel 09:16

For me as someone who's been in the industry for 20 years, yes.

M Michelle Glogovac 09:21

So tell me about your company and what makes it different.

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Angela Engel 09:25

Yeah, I mean, so I come from a world of I'm gonna be really clear. I'm not versed in like fiction and memoir. I'm really versed in visual books so I think also self published is gonna make me cringe a little bit because I'm into children's and cooking and like lifestyle self help like things that like really you need a printed beautiful quality, you know, where you can smell the paper. So, you know, I just want the listeners to understand that I come from that kind of credit. I went to Tennessee Press which published, you know, many of these awesome cookbooks, like Boulevard if anyone's eaten there, and, you know, Cakebread cellars and Napa and mustards grill. So I come from a very different type of publishing. And then I went to Chronicle Books here in San Francisco, which is just a pioneer and so many gift formats and incredible, incredible titles. So I come from that kind of world. And it within that world, there's a lot of custom publishing with brands, you know, I worked on splendors cookbook, I've worked on Hostess Twinkies cookbooks that are homes build a better burger cookbook. So I'm used to custom publishing even. But I did Top Chef. They, when they first came out, Top Chef, they the network bought like 10,000 copies of that book. And that was really kind of a hybrid custom deal within a traditional publisher right at Chronicle. So I came, I knew that this existed in publishing, right? Where there were buyback parts of the concept like you can't contract excuse me the contract. So I always say a traditional contract with a traditional publisher doesn't mean that it's wholesome. And I think that's, that's also why self publishing really has boomed, is that people have seen that, like, you know, I'm giving over all of my intellectual property. And I'm not really getting a ton in return. And then the publisher owns it for life. So I saw the need, I saw people, why are you why they wanted to self publish, they wanted a platform, they have a speaking game, they have a business to move forward. And they keep being say, You got to build your pot. Where do you have to wait three years? I mean, that is ridiculous. So I actually left publishing for about five or six years, I can't quite remember because I met an incredible woman named Christiane Lemieux who ran a brand called dwell studio, which was in target at the time. And we came up with a book idea in the same room with the fashion buyer as the book buyer. And in that moment, she the designer, and she she had a brand it was it was bought now, but she said to me, can you come work for me. And I left and went to help her kind of called you know, I worked with Amazon with her and Nordstroms. And very large accounts giggle and we we sort of cultivated this concept and fashion, okay, for example, Whole Foods. They said, Angela, we really love this on the blanket, but we don't want to sell it as a baby like it. Can you make it on a baby onesie on a layup? And we were like no problem. And in 10 months, this pattern is in stores at Whole Foods. And so I saw that in fashion, how quickly you move how you react to retail. And I saw that in publishing. We're like a snail. Yeah, we're just flow. Right? Yeah. And so people are tired of publishing being so slow to and not not really listening to the market. And so that's how my company that collective book studio, we started, I was like, what if? What if we can surpass all of these timelines, and really listen to authors creators, breadmakers and make beautiful books and get them on shelves within a year to 18 months, and have full distribution not be bound by an Amazon and online platform, but really be sold at the strand and, you know, Barnes and Noble and Pauwels bookstore here in the Bay Area book Think like all of our favorite bookstores. And that's what I did.

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Michelle Glogovac 13:49

And so how do you do that? Like, you don't have to give away costs, you know? But how is it that you can surpass all of these timelines when these ginormous publishers are taking two

years plus?

A

Angela Engel 14:03

Because I'm sharing the budgets with my authors, so I call my company called a partnership publishing house. So meaning, we take look, we have a very rigorous submissions process, we see if it's something that works with us and our brand and was aligned with sort of the kinds of books that we like to do. I do a lot of women's voices. I do. You know, I have a book called Dear White women, which is an anti racist book, that's incredible. I have a book called A little less of a hot mess, which is a mums guide. And this is with a therapist who has really addressed his anxiety. You know, I, we really take a look at our submissions, we really vet them. And then what we do is we talk with a developmental editor, that's really, you know, really good in that space about the project and we get a bid from them and then we actually He our authors pay into that right they pay in and they invest in the work then they own the work and I actually only am asking for a five year distribution deal versus lifetime and they also retain a lot more of their rights so like they can buy the art meaning that they can you know, sell it on I don't know coffee mugs if they chose sure

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Michelle Glogovac 15:25

merch. Yeah. Well, I right now, I just want to come over and read your bookshelves. Because they all really great work.

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Angela Engel 15:35

Yeah, they are really fun. Well, what are you into the show?

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Michelle Glogovac 15:39

I love everything that you just talked about. And I do a mixture of my reading is part fiction. I read fiction at night before bed. But then I read a lot of nonfiction memoirs, you know, leadership books, things that will help me grow as a person, whether it's in business, or really just as, as an individual, as a human to be better and to learn about outside things that I don't experience. So I love everything, all the titles that you dropped.

A

Angela Engel 16:09

Yeah, no, it's really true. I mean, well, especially because I'm in the nonfiction space, right? Like, I love nonfiction. I love I always say this to people, what, because often we get pitched memoir. And that's not what we do. And memoir is a category and a beast all on its own and people sometimes, what's the difference, right with a nonfiction book that you do, and I always say, a nonfiction book, a great nonfiction book, is there to solve a problem for the reader? Yes. A memoir is not that's not the goal of the memoir, write a memoir on a book, in a bookstore often, often is in a space with a duffel. It's a very different category all to itself.

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Michelle Glogovac 16:55

Yeah. And I do I love a memoir that feels like you're kind of like watching a movie.

A

Angela Engel 17:00

Correct? It's a different genre. Yeah.

M

Michelle Glogovac 17:03

So now you've done all of this, and you've raised three girls while doing it. Yes, I have. And I

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Angela Engel 17:10

keep an eye and I'm raising them now.

M

Michelle Glogovac 17:13

And before we hit record, we both were talking about how balanced is complete and utter nonsense. And we don't believe it.

A

Angela Engel 17:20

Absolutely. Oh, my God, I actually read this article. I don't know this, I wrote this piece on my blog in 2020. Right before the pandemic hit, right. So like, Come on, now, I should rewrite this thing. But like, in in February of 2020, I read this article, and it was all about mastering motherhood, right. And I got really angry. And I was like, I don't love that concept. So I actually wrote on my blog, when I call O equals success out of office equals success. And it really has to do with my, my career journey, which was I grows up really quickly in publishing. You know, I'm in my late 20s and early 30s, I've, I have I have a big job at Chronicle Books. I'm you know, a senior director of, of mass market sales, I sell to Costco and Target and buy buy baby as well as when babies are awesome. Toys R Us was a big chain, Staples OfficeMax. I mean, you name it, I It's probably as a shopping cart, and I sold it. And I was in these large corporate rooms. And honestly, at that time, that's over, almost, you know, 14 years ago, when I had my first child, there wasn't pumping rooms, you know. And I would go into a utility closet, so pump. And I just started to get tired and I wanted to have another baby and you know, me going into the fashion and baby fashion world was like a way to sort of also do a trade show a gift, a trade show with an ERT wearing my baby in an ergo like so I've really had this kind of ability in my career, to sort of figure out where my family is at, but it's never been like, balanced. It's just been like, a way that works for me. And that's why I don't think you can master motherhood and you, you were always on this journey to master ourselves. And that looks really different for everybody.

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Michelle Glogovac 19:29

Michelle Glogovac 19:29

Yeah, and I think when we talk about mastering motherhood, it's going to be different, no matter who you are, but then your career and to you even if you have two children made from the same two people, they're totally different individuals. So you can't master one and then think that you're going to master mothering the other one too. It just doesn't work that way.

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Angela Engel 19:50

Exactly. And I write this piece, you know, I don't have like a work self at a home self like you can't really divide that and you can't really divide your motherhood And part two, right. So anyways, I found I find it at my own company partly, you know, in a reaction to watching, you know, so many great friends leave houses, developmental editors and and designers and knew I could cultivate them together under one roof and one service. And I also did it because I wanted to figure out a career path for myself that I might be able to, you know, make my own time, which is really lovely for my kids, right? Like, I can work from anywhere now, but I, I could, what I found in my own business and end of 2019 Yeah,

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Michelle Glogovac 20:44

and it's amazing to be able to shut it down, you know, I block my calendar to certain time every day, because I can. And I think that play, it's a beautiful thing. But we also have to learn how to be able to do that. Because just as you came from working for someone else, you know, I worked in the corporate world too. And you don't just get to block calendar, because you know, the kids are going to come home from school. So it's definitely a learning curve, in that mastery sort of way of, you know, mastering your own time.

A

Angela Engel 21:14

Yeah, exactly. I always say there's like, no such thing of mastering motherhood or mastering or extend it's like this never ending process. Right? Yes. Seeking self, and striving for our own personal, like brand of success. That's what I think.

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Michelle Glogovac 21:30

Absolutely. So what kinds of books are you looking for? Now? Do you have like a wish list of people who would you?

A

Angela Engel 21:37

I mean, I Yeah, always, I mean, I love I love food and wine, like anytime I like my

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Michelle Glogovac 21:47

food and wine.

A

Angela Engel 21:51

I mean, anytime I can get a food, wine and drink bug, like I would jump on it, they're just extremely costly to produce. So, you know, those budgets are hard to get. And, you know, I think people are always like, wow, like, it's also like really hard to do a really great cookbook, right? Like, you really need a lot of eyes on there. And the recipe testing or at least, you know, really, really great. We have an awesome developmental editor who is at Treadwell who was at Chronicle Books for 18 years and food and wine, and now she lives with us. And so you know, but she deserves to be paid for her worksheets. She's just so good. So like, but I love that I always love a great, great children's book. But and but you know, also what I call leadership, light, maybe business light, maybe it's called like leadership books are really important to me. I think women's voices in that space is really important to me. You know, if there's something that can be solved a problem, you know, I have a book that I'm hoping she'll finish her manuscript, because it's called Quiet selling. And I love that idea of like, how do we how do we, you know, as intern, she'd kind of dress introverts, but all of us how we can use a different kind of method of selling. And I think that's a really, she comes from a really interesting corporate background and has worked for like Yahoo, and LinkedIn, and all of the Salesforce and some really big places. So I hope Christine can finish her manuscript because I can't wait to publish her book and hope you're

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Michelle Glogovac 23:23

listening, Christina.

A

Angela Engel 23:24

I know. I'm gonna I'm gonna give her this podcast episode, you know, so I just want I hope that makes people realize, like, if you can solve a problem, I'm interested in that book.

M

Michelle Glogovac 23:37

And can I ask you for those listening? Because I think that they, you know, self publishing costs money, like what kind of budget should someone who wants to work with you really consider that they're going to have to spend and invest in themselves for this book to happen?

A

Angela Engel 23:55

Yeah, I mean, it really depends on the shape of the riding, because like, you know, Ghost Riders, which are extremely expensive, you know, can cost anywhere between 10,070 \$5,000 really easily is, is a big, big investment. And so usually I with that kind of thing, when when we know that it's like, really, it's a ghost rider, we actually tell are really honest, the more trying to pair them with somebody that they and could they can pay directly. And, you know, I think it's a myth to think that I think that's what's the hardest thing is that why self publishing, I was like, Well, I didn't really have to invest. And I didn't have to hire a ghostwriter. And so I can self

publish the book. But is the book any is any good, right? It's a book your brand that we so so I think that's really different than when people have really taken the time to like, look at their courses or look at their, like, what they're writing already, maybe for a TEDx talk or whatever, and really put it to pen to paper and a real strong outline have actually done comparative research and are really serious about publishing, right? A developmental editor is what she did you don't necessarily need a ghostwriter, you can write that book. And we have that kind of developmental editor to help you with structure and tone. And, you know, does this make sense. And that's what we love to do and talk about the package. So, but but most of our books, you do need a really strong developmental editor. And that's not just a copy, edit, or a or a line edit, or a proofread. That's somebody really going in with you, and talking about what is going to make your book stand out for the readers. And so that I would say, for nonfiction, 40 to 50,000 words, this is just off the top of my head book, you know, you're gonna have to be kind of prepared to pay between 14 and \$17,000 in a creative fee all sudden done. And then it depends on how much you want to print the books. But I think you're gonna look at, you know, a 20 to \$25,000 investment.

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Michelle Glogovac 26:05

And I think people, I think there's a myth that authors all make a lot of money. And when you look at that kind of an investment, you know, how many books you're gonna have to sell to make that return? So why do you want to, you know, publish the book and create this, this work of art for yourself? I think these are all questions that someone should ask themselves, you know, going into it, versus, I'm just going to write this and hope for the best that I'm going to make a ton of money, but I'm not going to invest anything, you know, financially into it.

A

Angela Engel 26:38

Exactly. I mean, listen, I always say a book, you have to look at a book as a catalyst. Like, for example, like, is the book gonna get you speaking gigs, right? And yet, art Do you really want at the back of your speaking gig, you did this incredible TEDx talk. And then you want to be at the back of the room with your square selling a really bad paperback with typos? Like, really? How you what you want to leave people with? Or did you get paid a few \$1,000, up to \$10,000 to speak? And you have a published book that was vetted by and is able and do you have maybe, you know, the Books Inc, selling them in the room with you. And because buyers are deserting, and they shouldn't be, they can't buy every self published book. But like so, you know, I'm very clear, the criteria that a good hybrid or partnership publishing has to have is full distribution. And they have to be very clear with their submissions process and actually have guidelines. And honestly, I would be wary if I was an author of any company that has no submissions, guidelines that has no contract, right in queue. Those are like really weird, red flag people. Red flags. Yeah, that's basically they're really an online, they're, you know, service to help you get onto Amazon's KDP. That's not a publisher.

M

Michelle Glogovac 28:15

Yes, I love this, you're opening up so many eyes, for myself, for others. And I love that you're raising three amazing girls and doing this at the same time putting these people's voices out into the world. It's awesome, Angela.

A

Angela Engel 28:31

Thank you. I mean, I've been called a disrupter about this is really because I also, you know, when you invest in your work, I give back up till usually, you know, 50% of the royalties back to the author. So it's not like, you know, publishing is a very as is the long game. I want to tell everybody who wants to write a book, it's about the long game. And if you have a goal in mind, and you really believe in the project, like don't let everyone set tell no. But there's a lot of book coaches and writer, there's no matter what people are going to have to pay to be part of organizations like you can't just be expected to not pay anything and sell your book. It's even depressional pub authors. They're putting quite a lot of money into building their platforms into other areas of their work in order or using the advanced to do that.

M

Michelle Glogovac 29:32

Yeah, absolutely. I love it. Where can everyone find you?

A

Angela Engel 29:37

Okay, that's a great question. So I'm very active on LinkedIn. Just I'm Angela angle on LinkedIn. And I'm the founder and publisher of the collective book studio, which is really easy website, the collective book dot studio. I also love Instagram and I will get on the DMS I'm at the collective book studio. I know we're on Twitter and run, tick tock or book talk a little bit, but I don't really monitor those probably because my 14 year old girl would kill me if I'm on those platforms. So we kind of have this pact where like I, you know, let my marketing team do that. But I still love to reach out on on Instagram, DMS. And so I would just do that either LinkedIn, Instagram, or reach out to us on our website.

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Michelle Glogovac 30:30

Thank you so much. Absolutely. Thank

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Angela Engel 30:33

you, Michelle.

M

Michelle Glogovac 30:36

Well, friends, I don't know if you were shocked at the dollar amount the Angela dropped. I'm not because I've been doing a lot of research on my own, into what goes in to writing a book into creating it and getting it out into the world. It's an investment. But as Angela mentioned, it's one that's going to represent you and it's going to represent you for years and years to come. So look at it as a long term investment, not something that's going to make you rich by tomorrow, not something that's going to make you popular or famous by tomorrow, but

something that is going to be with you forever. If you're interested in reaching out to Angela and learning more about the collaborative book publishing process, please do. I would love to see more food and wine books because you know, I'm a lover of food and wine but also because they're beautiful books. I encourage you to write that book that you've been thinking about that you have been contemplating outlining. Go do it because the world wants to read it. Until next week, my friends, start writing your book and start the process today.