

Transcript

Wynne Leon

Welcome to the sharing the heart of the matter podcast where we celebrate the storyteller in us all. I'm Wynne Leon, and in this episode, Vicki Atkinson and I are talking with author, Blogger and corporate communications specialist Brian Hannon about national novel writing. Brian tells us why he values the encouragement and accountability piece of Nanowrimo. He spills a little bit about the project he has in mind and the goals he's setting for them up. Brian is such a great writer with roots as a newspaper writer and a corporate communications specialist, so we get to see into the dichotomy of the flexibility in writing. Brian has so beautifully explored and post this week contrasted with the structure necessary to produce a novel. It's fun to hear how he makes time to write, especially as he gears up for Nano Rimo. Brian also turns the table on Vicki and me and gets us to reveal a bit of the bigger projects we are working. Then we get to collectively talk about the wonderful goal of producing wholehearted writing and whatever medium we choose. I'm confident you'll love the scenic and beautiful places we explore as we share the power of storytelling and podcasts and posts, and in novels we know you'll love it. Hi, Brian. Hi, Vicki.

Vicki Atkinson

Hi.

Brian Hannon

Hey there, how you doing?

Wynne Leon

Great. It's almost the end of October.

Vicki Atkinson

How did we get here? Right. I know. I know. It's crazy. And so many things going on in the world. Our listeners and viewers, Ryan and Wynn, and I've had a great free game chat solving all the world's problems.

Brian Hannon

Just listen to us.

Vicki Atkinson

I know, but it's probably a good thing for everyone that we weren't recording that. Yeah, we were uncensored off the cuff. Right, But we're focusing now because there is something else coming up the first week of November that for writing. Pipes is a a monumental kind of consideration. You know, for some folks. And Brian, you were, you know, gracious enough because we've had some side chat about this event for writers. It's intended, I think, to provide inspiration a platform for accountability, but also to create. Some community and you know. We are sitting here, part of the matter, the three of us, you know, sort of the the founding trio here. So we we are, you know,

captivated by all of that. So we thought we would chat about it today. But I thought before we get started, I'll just mention you know, for those that I trip over my tongue always with nano rimo. But it is national novel writing month is what it stands for, and according to the website it is a 501C3 nonprofit providing the tools, the structure, the community, and the encouragement to help people find their voices. Achieve creative goals and build new worlds on and off the page. Sounds very star treky. I don't know, right?

Brian Hannon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, but it is. It's an activity that writers can sign up for. So, Brian, tell us a little bit about, you know, why you were intrigued by this, along with many others. You know, why is nano on your?

Brian Hannon

I I don't know how long they've been around, I think maybe the 90s and I've always heard of it. I I you know, I'd heard that it was out there and you know, I definitely over the past few years there there's been a lot more press and there's been a lot more media about hey, get ready for for writing, writing a novel in a month kind of thing in in in November. And again, as a writer, I I've long had the dream of like you guys. I'm writing my own book, whether it be a novel or a memoir. And again I, I've I've looked at thought about it at various points, but I've I've always sort of let it pass. And. I I just it it keeps. Coming back to me and and. It jumped out at me because of the accountability that it brings.

Wynne Leon

Just to be clear, I dream. Of you writing a novel. Really clear about that.

Brian Hannon

Yeah, but you guys have done it. You guys have done the hard work already. I'm and I'm you're inspiring me. I'm investing you guys.

Vicki Atkinson

But I think it's it's one thing to write about your family. You know, when it's it's factual and you're doing the storytelling, it's a whole other thing. You know, like the the Nano website, you know. Says to really think about building new worlds, you know, and creating things. So I think about novel writing. It's like, oh, God, that's a hurdle, right, to call into something brand new. Yeah.

Brian Hannon

Yeah, yeah. No, I mean, I so. So I did attempt a a novel a few years ago, and I I got around 30,000 words and.

Vicki Atkinson

In the world.

Brian Hannon

That I created was not very star trekky. It was not that much unlike my own, but it it was. Yeah, yeah, I started writing it when I was very busy with work and had a lot of demands and. It just so. Happens that. So my story is essentially A and a. A large accident happens, a huge crash and it's, but it starts out as a, you know, business executive leaving his home. You know, kissing his wife goodbye while she sleeps. And you know he heads out early in the morning. It's also then about it follows not only him, but then a couple young woman who were leaving to go to a concert and then and a a truck driver. But the first guy that Chris Miller was, who's my main character. Not that much. Unlike myself. Now it's not me, but certainly leaving early the the the pressures. Yeah, I stole a couple of names from, I think my former boss's name was in there. I I think a couple other people. So that's.

Speaker

MHM.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Brian Hannon

I'm going back to that story. My challenge at the time is I left a lot of gaps I I didn't know how I was going to fix some things, so I left left, you know, OK, I'm just going to keep moving on. And my goal now and I think that's where I'm fudging the Nan Remo. Philosophy or mission a little bit is I'm I'm I'm trying to fill in those gaps versus just starting from from the beginning.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. Of the four things that Nanowrimo says that they provide tool structure, encouragement and community. Which ones are most important to you?

Brian Hannon

I I think encouragement, encouragement and and accountability. It it, I don't know why but I I I think you know originally when I started the blog it was because ohh I'm going to start to feature my creative writing and that's great. But I yeah, I think I've learned that I'm actually. Yeah, my attention seems to shift sometimes and what I need is that accountability that that weekly, not just someone saying, hey, Brian, are you working on your novel, how's it? Coming but that daily, yes, 1600 words sounds a lot. But that's like a page and a half, maybe 2 pages to have that accountability of. Like OK, are you doing it? Where are you at sticking to it and then that encouragement, you know, like I I.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Brian Hannon

I get annoyed that I'm not that I haven't written books so that that's what I thought of writing when I first started writing right. It was all about was writing a book, and I think I have it in me. I'd like to be able to, even if I never publish it, I'd like to be able to say. You know, writing is a different kind of

field, different kind of job. I'd like to be able to, when someone asked me, hey, what does a writer do? Oh, OK. You're a good friend. Here's my. Novel, you know, read this. And I've never had that. I've had obviously stories or newspaper stories or blogs, but I think people typically. Like of of, of, of a novel. So I it's it's. It's something important to me. If I never do anything else with it, at least I. Check that one off of my. You know, in in my own heart and and put that together.

Vicki Atkinson

Brian, you mentioned, could you can set your own goal. You mentioned 1600 words, are we getting a little hint of you know if you participate that you're you're thinking that you would want a daily writing goal of 1600 words. Is that kind of what you're?

Brian Hannon

Thinking no, you guys are putting me on the spot. I don't like that. Don't like accountability?

Wynne Leon

Yes.

Vicki Atkinson

You just said. You did. Oh my God. Let me check this understanding. I think you wrote down.

Wynne Leon

Four did it.

Brian Hannon

Yeah, yeah, you got. Of course, putting me on the spot. I I hope to get the 50,000. I I the the challenge with November is there's a lot of different things are going and I'm going away for a little bit, but the the goal is I I I feel good about. You know where I'm at? Like I I've done some things to try to get. Ready for it? And and we'll be and. But yeah, I I think it's definitely possible to get the 50,000 by the end of end of end of the month.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Yeah. Well, we're.

Wynne Leon

Vicki excited. Yeah, we are excited and and especially because we have this recorded.

Speaker

Ah.

Wynne Leon

That it's going and it's going live on November 1st. Vicky, you participated in Nanowrimo a couple years ago. Is that right?

Brian Hannon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah. I had a writer friend, also a communications professional. Who? UMI think that was 2019? So I was still, you know, working in higher Ed. But it was during the pandemic where a lot of us, you know, working from home. And I felt like I had this chunk of time that I I wasn't pushing myself hard enough. So I had a friend who said, you know, just do this. And I was confused because I thought it's. Word processing and it was like, uh, you know what? That I'm not a joiner, so I'll say that too that you know when's question about the encouragement stuff. There are a lot of different groups that you can join and I was like, Nope, Vicky the introvert is here. You know, I'll engage the dashboard, but yeah, my my friend said, I think you need to do this because it will put you on. A schedule we're doing, and this is how she put it and I so appreciated it doing something about your project. Pick a project, but do something with it every day. Even if you're logging your word count and you go backwards because you've edited out or you change things, it's. That, you know, check in to do something every day and it it helped me. I think that practice helped me to write surviving Sue in three months, you know, because I I kind of. I've been to the boot camp.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Brian Hannon

Yep, Yep, I and and I think there's some. That's why I'm being hard on myself. But then also flex. Able to you know, to modify at least to to make it work for me. That. Yeah. Again, I don't want to stop after the first week. I, you know, I understand that they're going to be some days where I do step back and maybe I do a little bit of editing which I I know they don't like. You to do. But I I think the biggest thing is that and that. Accountability that I'm keeping. Myself, accountable to getting to making progress, and then the encouragement of like, OK, but this, this is doable. I I mean, I know I've done part of this in the past, but I can get to the end line. And so that point I'm, I'm excited. I'm excited about undertaking.

Wynne Leon

It well, the next part about.

Vicki Atkinson

What can we do?

Wynne Leon

Setting the it's setting the schedule right so that you can know that you can do it every day, yeah.

Brian Hannon

Yep.

Wynne Leon

It is a little hard as you put it out. It's November and then there's December. After that, both of the months with sort of big interruptions that make it, yeah.

Brian Hannon

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I'm trying to help myself. Like I've gotten. I've written ahead from a blogging standpoint so that I don't have an excuse to.

Wynne Leon

OK.

Brian Hannon

To to not write like oh, I need a blog. Well, that's taken care of.

Wynne Leon

Listen.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, that's good. Cause we were gonna ask you, like, what? What's your game plan? So that's one thing you're trying to look at. Your other writing tasks and kind of make space because you have to, right?

Brian Hannon

And. Yep, Yep. Yeah. Trying to make space. I again being you know managing schedule you know I would I I I will be probably. Yeah. Like certain things I'll be giving up a little bit like you know less TV less you know stuff like that and that that's good. I mean you know it's going to be disciplined. Now again more or less making sure that I'm taking time each day to work towards the project, and if that means less leisure time in the evening or if that means getting up a little bit earlier in the morning. Yeah, I you know, I I do see that as as what part of my my schedule is and trying to get up a little earlier and and at least put some time into you know getting a few 100 words and then later in the evening as well and and and you know I have my my workspace. You know, in, in, in my office set set aside, it's more or less just really making writing, making writing the novel a priority.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

But I like what Wynn said too, about remembering that sometimes in order to get there, you might need to go take a walk. You might need to, like, shake things loose a little bit to get the the JU ju to keep it going right. And I think that was before we started recording. I I was saying that I listened to a podcast with Sanjay Gupta, who was talking about.

Brian Hannon

Yeah, yeah.

Wynne Leon

All the the incredible brain benefits of exercise, one of which is that you know, our brain reduces just the right. Of of juice to inspire creativity and and all those other things, it's that that happens often when we're on the move rather than when we're sitting.

Brian Hannon

I in some ways that I I feel like that's going to be the biggest shift for me as well or it has been when I'm writing a lot is. Actually making time not necessarily just for writing, but making time for walking, for, for getting out, exercising. Because I tend to say ohh I don't have time for them, I gotta crank out whatever. I gotta meet this writing deadline and that's true. But the bigger thing is I need time to think about ideas and and to.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Brian Hannon

All the things that come into being created creative and and and driving that creativity.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, there's uh, Mary Oliver. We love all things Mary Oliver, but there's a Mary Oliver quote. About when you're inspired, you know whatever that that line is the phrase a couple of words, you know together that you really have to go write it down. Because however you do that, that might be the inspirational be a gateway to to who knows what, but you have to, you know, be open to it. But then I often think ohh I'll remember.

Speaker

Yeah. Yeah.

Brian Hannon

It's funny you mentioned that because I I I'm one who I think of a lot of things in the in that I'm sleeping or middle of the night. And you know, like I've got. I've. Put a notepad next to our bed. You know, there's usually one there, but I I made sure that it's there because to write some of that down and make sure I don't lose those ideas because it's it's all that's frustrating. I can never remember things that I think about in the middle of night that I think are great. Ideas.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, when I'm a little worried cuz I'm looking at the calendar here. Oh, my gosh, this episode, Brian, he added. Will be our 91st 1:00 and it's scheduled to drop on Friday, November 1st. You know the timing couldn't be more on point.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Exactly what a kick off. We're here to help Brian. We're here to help. Yeah.

Brian Hannon

Yeah. And then. Then you have pressure, Brian. No pressure at all.

Vicki Atkinson

He said go.

Brian Hannon

Yeah. Well, I I think everyone wants to know, though they don't really care about my novel. They want to know what you guys are up to because you're the ones who have an, you know, a following who have written books already. Where are you 2 at with your with your next creative.

Vicki Atkinson

Ohh gosh. You wanna do rock, paper, scissors win.

Wynne Leon

You know, you go you go.

Speaker

Right.

Vicki Atkinson

Win has been so gracious and two other beta readers that you know I've I've gotten myself through. The writing of my novel and when had more than one sleepless night, I know kind of reading, giving me some rich and wonderful feedback, but I that's why I'm intrigued about nano this time about the accountability for the editing, cuz now I'm absorbing really great feedback. And I, yeah, I'm. I'm hoping that this piece sees the light of day in the next year, but I think, you know, when you are creating worlds and I think you'll find this too, Brian. The the worry that I had throughout and when probably. And my friend Kathleen and Linda probably got sick of hearing this. But you worry about the worthiness. Is it compelling enough that someone would want to read it? It's. The thing that that we're writing at, but is it something that will sustain interest? And I think you get lost in the soup of of what you're doing to your point before Brian, it's hard to know because you're so close to it.

Brian Hannon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

So I'm in the thick of it too. November 1st is coming and I got a deadline by Thanksgiving. I gotta. I'm gonna crank it out.

Brian Hannon

That's awesome. That's that's great. And I do understand that that I think I the last time around, I definitely felt that like, OK, this that's one of the reasons why I stopped. I felt like it was just gobbledygook like that. You know, there was no one that's going to read this and that's where that,

that's why I'm going back and really trying to. Make sure that I have enough conflict and make sure that that that mission or that that overall goal is is there throughout the story.

Vicki Atkinson

But it's hard to know when you're doing it. Yeah, but when you've got like 5 different ideas, they're mushrooming about creativity and kind of projects of other sorts is or anything that you want to go on.

Brian Hannon

Definitely.

Vicki Atkinson

Record about today.

Wynne Leon

Look, you know, I think. Deirdre Wilcox, who's my meditation teacher, and she's been on this podcast. She has this practice, you know, it's at the sort of inflection points of her day to stop. And think about what? What memories? You know, what is she? What's her take away? And I've started trying to do that with sort of writing shorter things just, you know, publishing a picture. And with a, you know, small caption of capturing those all moments. Miss O said to me the other day she's like. You know. Extraordinary is just. Extra and ordinary, and finding those extra.

Speaker

Mike.

Wynne Leon

Things in our ordinary moments that have sort of captivated my attention. But you know, it's trying to wipe like those 20 words that mean something. That's what I'm working on.

Brian Hannon

That's awesome. That is really awesome. That's cool.

Vicki Atkinson

And I'm often sharing with when and I would say this about your blogging too, Brian. There's so much, you know, that both of you having been doing this for as long as you have. There's so much to mine for inspiration and things that you have written. And I don't always know what shape that takes, but that wholehearted writing you know there is, there is a repository of things that you both have done that are highly meaningful and thoughtful and kind of reverent and joyful just about life and family and the human condition. So I think we forget to praise each other ourselves, you know, for the body of work that often exists, that isn't necessarily bound together and not sitting on a shelf.

Wynne Leon

MHM.

Vicki Atkinson

But what you contribute to community and and sharing with other bloggers? It's rich and wonderful.

Wynne Leon

Hmm. I I love your phrase there wholehearted writing.

Brian Hannon

Yeah, yeah, definitely, definitely. I love that. Thank you. Yeah. I I, I do stop myself sometimes because, yeah, I I want to write a novel and and it it's wonderful. But in some ways, I.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Brian Hannon

Yeah, I think you know, there's at some point I do want to pull together my. My blog pieces. And and pull that into a book or a A A story. Because that I think is what life is all about. It it it's finding the the, the, the joy in the everyday that I I at least gets me very excited. So I yeah, I I I I I think you're.

Vicki Atkinson

Ah.

Brian Hannon

On to something.

Vicki Atkinson

There. Yeah. Yeah. Well, and we podcasted last year around this time with Rick Camper. My publisher friend and he has a book. Father knows nothing that is delightful, but it is a compendium of stories you know from his parenting journey that you know, I think people forget and he pulled from other things that he had written and published. And I think we we forget that those things that's in the packaging.

Brian Hannon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

And how we pull things together so.

Brian Hannon

I I think often of the, you know, one of the books that I love to, you know, growing up or as a teenager, everything I learned in kindergarten by Robert, that you have the same kind of idea. I love that idea.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Speaker

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Exactly, yeah. Oh my goodness. Well, this was fun.

Wynne Leon

So fun I love this. Here's here's the whole hearted writing from all of us and everybody listening. Brian, thank you for coming on and and inspiring us and Vicky with your commitment to you know this encouragement and community as.

Brian Hannon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Our pleasure, God.

Brian Hannon

Thank you. Thanks you definitely.

Wynne Leon

Bye bye. Thank you for listening. Our music is composed for sharing the heart of the matter by the exquisitely talented duo of Jack Canfora and Rob Koenig for show notes and more great inspiration, please visit our site at [sharingtheheartofthe. Matter.com](http://sharingtheheartofthe.Matter.com).