RT: I'm joined today by a new friend of mine, Paul Green, who is the owner of MSP Marketing Edge, a Milton Keynes-based business aimed at helping IT solution providers and managed service providers with their marketing efforts.

Paul grew and then sold a very successful B2B marketing company prior to IT support marketing, so he knows what successful marketing really looks like. Thank you for joining me, Paul!

PG: I'm an avid listener of TubbTalk and it's cool to actually be here on the podcast.

RT: I'm honoured you would join me! Let's jump straight in and address something upfront. You and I have become friends over the past few months; I'm from a very techy, geeky background but you are *not* a techy, although you are a geek to a degree.

You didn't own an IT support business, but you see that as a strength, don't you when it comes to working with MSPs (managed service providers)?

PG: Absolutely. I work with nearly 100 MSPs quite closely, whether that's over things like Facebook or face to face, and the fact that I'm not coming at everything from it from a technical aspect I believe is an advantage.

It means I can step back and, let's use a cliché, it's almost like I have a helicopter view. I understand what it's like to be a business owner, because I was the guy that at 30 quit a job which was actually quite a well-paid job in the media. I started a business in my bedroom, which felt like a really good idea at the time.

I've been through all the emotions, the highs and lows and the, 'Oh my God, I can't make payroll!' The cashflow crises, the first few staff, the taking on of premises, all this stuff that your average MSP does over a decade, I did that.

It just wasn't a technical business, it was a marketing business. It's actually exactly the same model - we were selling services on a recurring revenue basis - it's just what we were delivering wasn't technical stuff.

I always come at it from the business owner's point of view and when I'm working with someone, an MSP, I don't really want to get bogged down in, 'Is Continuum great or not?' 'Should I buy IT Glue or should I not?' I'm happy to have those conversations and the fact that I've just said those two things shows I'm obviously aware of stuff and I've worked with MSPs for a couple of years.

But, I I don't want to get bogged down in that kind of stuff, because I want to be able to stand back. Let's take Continuum as a concept. Outsourcing your low-level grunt work to another company that can do it better and faster than you, if it works, in principle that is a bloody great idea. It frees you the business owner, and your top technical staff, to focus in on the things that make the biggest difference to the clients.

The things I'm interested in are helping business owners have a great life, helping business owners free themselves from the prison of their own business, and typically that's done through great marketing.

If you can get more new clients and you can get your existing clients to choose to buy more from you, that delivers a level of freedom. The fact that I don't come from an MSP background, I believe is an advantage. I really do.

RT: I think it is as well and I'm going to look at it from a different perspective. I am a techy, I'm a geek, as we've touched upon there, and I used to run an MSP myself. Interestingly, the flip side of the coin is, a lot of the work that I do, people outside the IT industry say, 'Hey Ric, you know that stuff you talk about for the IT industry? That's applicable to my business and I'm a florist'. Or they work in real estate,

I totally get that, and I think good business is good business, isn't it? Regardless of what your background is.

PG: It is. The business I sold in March 2016, specialised in healthcare marketing - vets, dentists and opticians are all business owners, and if you put a vet in particular and an IT owner together in a room, they'd have 80% of their business the same.

OK, MSPs fix computers and stop computers breaking. Let's do the same to animals. Vets are moving from right now from a break/fix model to a recurring revenue model. They have that hassle of someone's got to be there at 8:30, 9:00 in the morning because that's when the phone starts ringing, or in their case animals coming through the door.

It's exactly the same business, and no surprise, they have exactly the same challenges: keeping control of costs, finding good staff, keeping good staff - because both the technical sector and the veterinary sector have real problems getting qualified staff to stay.

It's the fact that clients stay for years, which is good, but their expectations go up and they want the bills to go down and so on, so that they're almost identical businesses. And that's where I come at it from - that 80% of things that make the biggest difference.

RT: Before we talk about the MSP Marketing Edge specifically and what you do for IT companies, let's rewind a little bit, because you've got a very interesting past! We've already touched upon the B2B marketing company, and I'd love to hear more about that.

You've also alluded to a couple of things such as business owners building a prison of their own making, and I'd like to hear more about that. However, you shared something just before we went on air and start recording today, that I didn't know about you, which is that you used to be a radio presenter.

PG: I did. I failed an A level in around 1991 and it was the best thing that ever happened to me, because I couldn't then go to university. In the year that I was resitting my economics A level, I got a job on a newspaper selling advertising, which is awful. But then I moved on and became a journalist and they trained me up to do it.

After three years, when I was about 23, I auditioned for the local radio station in Northampton called Northampton 96, which is now called Heart - all the stations I've ever worked at are now called Heart!

I got into radio and became a newsreader, then a presenter and went to be a programme controller - someone who's in charge of the programming. I was running stations and I did 10 years in radio. I love radio and I miss it every day.

Last year I did a couple of radio shifts for a friend and remembered it's like an old jumper you put on. When you first put it on you think, 'Oh this is so cosy, this jumper!' and then you remember why you stopped wearing the jumper! Radio, like any job, sounds showbiz and glam, but ultimately you sat in a room on your own, talking to thousands of people who aren't listening, so I got out of that.

If you've ever read The e-Myth Revisited…

RT: I have, it's like a bible for me.

PG: It's a great book. You'll remember then, that Michael Gerber talks about the entrepreneurial seizure, where you get that thought in your head, 'I've got to start my own business!' and that was me at 28 or 29, and I did what so many people have done.

I spent a couple of unhappy years working for someone else and then I decided to start my own business. I quit my job and started in the bedroom and began that journey. The journey for me has been almost identical to the journey of virtually any business owner, which is: start with self-employment, throw yourself into 80-hour weeks, you don't care about getting up at six in the morning and going to bed at 10 at night, because you're your own boss!

Then you start to eventually get too busy, so you take someone on, and then before you know you've got premises and, you said it yourself, you're locked in a prison. I can't remember which book I read it in, but one of them said that most business owners create a prison of their own design and lock themselves inside.

That's exactly what I did. I woke up at 35 with three staff and a turnover of about £250,000, but the business didn't happen if I wasn't there. I think it was a PR business at the time, and I hated it. In five years, I'd gone from this passion and this entrepreneurial seizure of, 'I've got to start a business!' to being the worst employee in the business, and I was the owner!

I meet so many people like this, there are so many MSPs like it. MSP is a great model and a terrible model at the same time. What makes it great is huge levels of recurring revenues. People need it as much as they want it, and the retention - I've never known any industry anywhere, any sector, which keeps clients for so long.

You can meet someone who's been going 12 or 15 years and they've still got clients from day one 15 years later. It's insane! But I think this is also what makes it bad, because I think it makes MSP owners lazy. They're pootling along, fixing stuff and the money's coming in every month.

They're just there and keep going, they haven't got any passion for the business anymore because they locked in that prison, but because the money just keeps turning up they do the same. It's very easy to do that for five to 10 years and not realise that you are locked in that prison.

RT: Yeah, I agree. So, what changed for you then? You'd built this business, you were quite successful by any measure, so what changed for you to say, 'OK, I want to move on'?

PG: My wife and I were trying for five years to have a baby and it wasn't happening for no reason, and there was nothing wrong with either of us. Although our fertility consultant said she was old and I was stressed, which was nice!

We did three rounds of IVF and we had a baby, but unfortunately, she was born 15 weeks premature - she was born at 25 weeks. She's fine now - she's eight and insanely cool. But at the time, I mean we had an hour's notice and suddenly there was a baby and I just dropped away from the business.

It was 2am in on a Sunday, sat in hospital in Kettering of all places, texting my three staff saying, 'Oh my God, the baby's arrived. I don't know what's happening, they don't think she's going to survive. Can you just do what you can?'

And that went on for three months, where she was in hospital. Sometimes as business owners, we can be physically in the room, but we're mentally elsewhere. My wife needed me, so I mentally and physically left my business. I was keeping in touch but literally a phone call now and again.

I was there for my wife and it was very good for us, and our daughter was amazing with her progress through hospital. Then I went back to work and I was terrified that there would be no business because my right-hand person, a lovely lady called Claire who I'm still in touch with today had been given all the bank login details and told her what she should be doing.

I'd left her to just get on with it and I'd kind of expected to go back and there'd be no business, and actually it turns out they'd done better without me.

RT: How did that make you feel? I've gone through the same process myself.

PG: Because it wasn't planned, I was relieved, then offended and then terrified. I remember sitting in my office - we had a little rented unit – 6.10 in the morning on the first day I was back, thinking, 'Oh my God, they fixed this, they fixed this. They've actually got a new client in, they've kept the payroll going, we've got more cash in the bank than when I'm here'.

When I got back and talked to them all, and bought them a coffee and said well done. Then I said, 'What made the difference?' And they looked at each other and laughed and said, 'Well, you weren't here creating chaos!'

I realised that in my drive to really grow this into a big business and to free myself and I was just constantly diverting their attention off what they were trying to do and coming up with stupid ideas.

Virtually from that week on I stopped going into the office so much. I worked full time in the business, but I initially I would work out of Starbucks, Costa, McDonald's, anywhere with Wifi and power, that was my office.

I'm speaking to you now from an office near my home - we actually moved an hour away from where I work and got separate office units. I've got somewhere to work, but, I can't be interrupted by staff or family.

The business just grew. I can't remember the figures now, but we flipped the business model and moved to a recurring revenue model. We completely changed what we did and came up with a niche focus on the healthcare.

Forget the word 'healthcare' - niche focus is the, is the key lesson for that. And it grew and grew and grew. And at its peak we were doing a seven-figure turnover. Six figure EBITDA and 15 staff at its peak.

Here's an interesting lesson – I made three of them redundant, and the workload didn't change, but the profits went up - that was quite an interesting lesson in overstaffing.

We sold it in March 2016 and I can't tell you how much because I'm still within my restricted zone on that, but it was a nice premium sale. I did a six-week handover and more or less walked away.

The reason that we sold that business was: it was a great business, a cashflow positive, and it operated without me. I was still steering the ship, but at that point I was going into the office two hours on a Thursday morning.

I called them angry Thursdays because I'd go in and get angry with everyone and then walk away. But it was highly systemised, the staff knew what they were doing, I went on a three-week cruise, six months before and they barely even noticed I was gone. It was that kind of level of disengagement.

I sold it partly because I was bored and partly because we obviously we had a good offer, but that was very interesting. We did that in six years and that was a lot of fun.

RT: That is a fantastic story, and I totally empathise with the point where you realise the business can run without you. On a rational level that is fantastic, but on an emotional level and an ego level – hmm!

PG: I remember going to the cinema because I like daytime cinema for breaks, thinking and motivation. I did that a year before I sold it and came out, turned on my phone and there was nothing. I'd been gone for three hours, sucked into a Marvel film, but there were no texts, there's no WhatsApp, there was no email, nothing.

I rang my ops manager and said, 'Is everything all right'? And she's like, 'Yeah', almost like what do you want? The very last guy I employed, called Aaron, and I can't remember his surname, didn't know who I was.

He said to the staff about the third Thursday when he'd seen me come in, 'Who's that guy that comes in on Thursday morning?' And that's when you kind of realise, 'I've really detached from what we're doing here', and maybe I detached too much.

I do look back now with rose-tinted glasses and think, 'What if I kept it? We could be earning £3 million by now', and it's always easy to say that, but that's certainly the way to do it.

Some of the MSP owners I work with today, the ones who are growing the fastest without having heart attacks and strokes, are the ones that are in that position where they go into the business by choice, they don't go anywhere near the phones or the clients, they don't get dragged into, 'Can you just…?'

No one knocks on the door to saying, 'We haven't got any milk, we haven't got any paper for the printer,' because all that is clutter and that's what gets in the way of the big issues and the big things you want to do.

The most successful MSP owners I work with have more holidays and spend the least amount of time in the office. There's one in particular I'm thinking of who will go into his office for two or three hours a month and his is the fastest growing, with highest level of recurring

revenue and the best staff. That's because it's *had* to be that way to give him the lifestyle he wants.

RT: Let's talk a little bit more about how you help MSPs. The MSP Marketing Edge - what does that look like? There's huge marketing element to that - the clue is in the title! However, I'm getting the impression that you're also helping businesses to avoid the mistakes that you made, if I can go as far as to say that.

PG: Exactly that. There are two core things I do. Having semi-retired a few years ago, I got bored very quickly and realised I'd sold away income stream and I didn't want to live off my capital.

I couldn't work with the vets, dentists and opticians, so I looked around and found tech support and IT support, as I thought of it back then. I've had a few clients over the years, delved into the market, I subscribed to your list and found other people.

I realised I am a geek, as you said. I'm not particularly technical, but I do love talking about computers and technical solutions and all that kind of stuff. Very quickly I identified where there are gaps in the market.

The biggest gap which we were trying to fill here in the UK, and soon to launch in the USA, is that most MSPs aren't very good at marketing and the world of marketing has changed around them. The MSP Marketing Edge stuff, we give to an MSP (and just one MSP per area) every month that they can use as their marketing material.

We give them guides, for example, we ghostwrite books and we've just written a new book about all the Microsoft software that's expiring in January, which is a massive marketing opportunity. We've got press releases, videos, emails, Facebook posts, LinkedIn, all that stuff.

The idea is we dedicate an enormous amount of time, centrally on creating this huge bunch of content and then we give it to, let's say one MSP in Reading, one in Swindon, one in Oxford and locks out all the others.

The idea is that within their area they can use it to get new clients, and we've made the price of that very, very low. We've got nearly 90 MSPs in the UK that they use that. Can I plug the website?

RT: Go for it! I was going to say nearly all of my own MSP clients work with you, so absolutely go for it!

PG: We do seem to share quite a lot of clients. And thank you, as I know you've mentioned it in the past, so thank you. It's www.mspmarketingedge.com and there's a little tool on there where you can go and put your area in to see if someone's beaten you to it or if it's still available.

That's one thing and that's my big passion project. We I have a huge Facebook group that goes with that and it's really nice to support people in a) getting new clients and b) upselling their existing clients, which is the second part of that.

The other thing I do is I have some mastermind groups. They're full and will probably be full for the for the next number of months. I have only two groups, because I get tired if I have more than two groups, which makes me sound a bit weak. But I've done this for years, and I like having a small group and getting really in deep with that group.

We meet once a month in Milton Keynes, which is where I live. There are 13 MSP owners in a room and we just talk, but it's a structured tool. We've talked about which suppliers are good and which aren't good. Your name comes up every month, Nigel Moore's name comes up every month…

We talk about how to get new clients, what's new and we've just put together an enormous LinkedIn strategy, and the 2020 thing about the Microsoft software expiring came out of one of those groups - we were just talking about it and someone flagged it up.

It's just become an amazing, safe environment with no recording or notes and what's said in the room stays in the room, and the goal is to make more money. We've helped people fire people, lose a business partner by choice, to steal tech from someone else and to find loads of new clients.

There are massive amounts of upselling, and we've identified something like 40 different recurring revenue streams as well, which is probably the most exciting thing that's come out of that. For those that have gone and done that, we all know that to sell more services to the people you're already dealing with is more profitable than getting new clients.

RT: Let's talk about upselling to existing clients a little bit more in a moment, but I'm just fascinated from your experience, coming from outside the IT industry to within the MSP industry and helping IT business owners now.

Answer this simple question with probably a big answer: why our MSP businesses so crap at marketing themselves?

PG: Because they don't need to be good at marketing. It's as simple as that. As I was saying earlier, you can keep a client for 10 years and it's a very long sales cycle. Most of the decent clients already have an MSP and the sales cycle for them leaving that incumbent, even if they're unhappy, they'll stay for another couple of years. It can take six to 12 months to get in at that right point, educate them, emotionally connect with them and move them over.

I think two reasons. One is that you don't need to be good at marketing because you keep clients forever. But secondly, the marketing is actually quite hard in this marketplace. This is where it MSPs do differ from vets.

A vet can put something on Facebook tomorrow and have five new clients in the morning. I kid you not - it can be that simple. They're dealing with consumers and it's very emotional

because it's about dogs and cats and ultimately the commitment to the vet is very low. You turn up, you don't like them, you go to a different vet.

Someone moving from one MSP to another is a major commitment. You're handing over your server, all of your stuff, your technology to someone else. The potential risks are huge and this is why MSPs have this great retention. It's called inertia loyalty.

It's the same reason you stay with an accountant years past the point you know you should really leave that accountant, and it's exactly the same with an MSP. There's loads of marketing out there, all sorts of advice and it's not difficult because it's basically B2B marketing. Once you've got a bunch of clients, it's so easy to just stick with that and do nothing with them.

RT: What advice would you give to an MSP that is doing no marketing at all? How would you get them to go from nothing to something and to see the results of it?

PG: That's a great question. I think you have to think long-term, so you have to keep marketing. No, let me reverse back a second. People buy when they're ready to buy. Right now, wherever you are, whichever town you're sat in, there are thousands of business owners and managers sat around you, and at this exact moment one of them has their head in their hands.

They're literally tearing out their hair because a service too slow or this is wrong, or their staff are whinging - all the common symptoms. Imagine if you could get some kind of magical, mystical thing that just connects you to that person right now. You pick up the phone and it connects to them.

You would get in and you would have a meeting with them and we all know once you've had the meeting you're more than likely to win the sale. This is what good marketing does. The old days of Yellow Pages and all of that is gone, even pay per click on Google I would say he's no longer a strategy for most MSPs, because the cost per click is just too high, apart from for the really big companies.

You've got to look at it and say, 'Well, look, people buy when they're ready to buy, how do I get the right message in front of the right person at the right time?' And the only way to do that is to build an audience.

I'm a big fan of LinkedIn. I think LinkedIn has changed so much in the last year under Microsoft's stewardship, surprisingly it's got better, and I say that is not the greatest Microsoft fan in the world. LinkedIn is a great tool to go and look for business compared to a couple of years ago. Facebook is a surprisingly great place to look for business, because even business owners and managers use Facebook, and particularly their downtime. In fact, if you can reach them in their downtime, it's better.

I'm a big fan of data capture and offering people something in return for their contact details, which is fully GDPR compliant. And I think the trick is you've got to build some audiences, and I try to persuade all the MSPs I work with to build an audience on, at the very least Facebook.

Today that has to be done through Facebook groups rather than through a Facebook page, because Facebook page content just isn't being shown to people, whereas Facebook groups are enormous right now. You've got to do the very least.

You should probably do a LinkedIn and be at least putting lots of content on LinkedIn. You should certainly be doing data capture on your website, and the trick is to get people in and to drip, drip, drip, drip, drip. You don't want to hard sell them, you want to get them in, start a relationship with them.

Get their permission for *you* to market to them and then educate them and not about techy stuff, because no one cares about it, literally no one. You educate them about the things that matter to them.

What matters to them is reliability, speed and not being caught out with GDPR or anything like that. They don't care about GDPR, but they do care about public humiliation. They do care about fines, all of that kind of stuff.

RT: Yeah, that absolutely makes sense. Great advice. We touched on it earlier, that when most people think of marketing, they think of reaching new clients and of course, that's a huge part of growing a business.

But in my experience, what lots of MSP owners do is overlook a massive resource, which is their existing clients. I know you're a huge fan of upselling as it's called. Tell us a little bit more about how you educate MSPs to make the most of that resource in front of them.

PG: I should probably find a different word than upselling, because there's actually no selling involved. People buy for one of two reasons. Either because they need something which is a decision made by the brain, or because they want something which is a decision made by the heart. 99.9% of MSP purchases, as in people buying from an MSP, is actually a heart decision, a want decision.

Why would I pick one MSP over another? Because, assuming that I don't know anything about technology, which the average business owner or manager doesn't, I'm going to pick you because I like you, or I'm not going to pick you because I don't like you.

When we look at existing clients, why would someone buy more stuff from you? Because they want it, as simple as that. I'll give you a very quick example. When GDPR came in in May, I was in the MSP Marketing Edge Facebook group and we were having a discussion about what the MSPS can do to get their clients readier for GDPR.

Someone mentioned something about encrypted laptops, and we did a quick survey of how many laptops you're supporting that are unencrypted. And as you can imagine, there were hundreds if not thousands of laptops out there supported by my MSP clients that weren't encrypted, so we put together little phone scripts along the lines of… I'll give you the whole script because you can still use this today if you've got any clients who don't encrypted laptops, you can literally pick up the phone now and do this.

"Hi, is that Bob?" "Yes. Bob Collins. Who's that?" Hi, it's Paul here from your IT support company." "How are you doing Paul?" "Do you know, I didn't sleep well last night". "Why is that then?" "Well, I was thinking about you Bob, not in any kind of weird way, but as I went to sleep last night, it suddenly occurred to me that you've got, how many laptops have you got in the business? You've got 17. OK.

"You've got 17 laptops in the business and according to our records they're not encrypted". "What does that mean?" "Well, what that means is, let me put it in layman's terms: If you lost one of those unencrypted laptops on a train, someone, a hacker, without much difficulty, could access, could bypass the password and could access your data".

"And the problem with that is, now that GDPR is in, you would have to ring the ICO and tell them about it *and* you'd have to contact all of your clients, every single human being who is on your laptop, which is probably everyone you know and tell them you've lost that laptop, which is just a major embarrassment."

At this point, Bob the client is saying, "Oh my God, yeah, this is awful. What can we do about it?" And of course, that's the point that you bring in Bitdefender, or introduce your favourite encryption tool here. Do it as a service, don't do it as a one off.

"It's an encryption service and it's £3.82 a month per laptop. Should I just get that sorted out for you?" Which is the upsell question. You look at something like that and Bob now is going to put down the phone and emotionally he's not going to be sitting there thinking, "Bloody IT firm has sold me more stuff!"

He's going to be sitting back emotionally thinking, "Thank God someone's looking out for us. Thank God we can make that problem go away for just the price of a coffee per laptop per month." Of course, for the MSP it's another two or three pounds of gross profit per laptop per month for the next 10 years.

And in my mind, that's what a good upselling is about. All of the MSPs I work with, I really recommend they do strategic reviews every year, so yes, you can do things like the ad-hoc phone calls just to sell more services when you've got something that comes up, but the real power is in sitting down with every client, even the one-man-band clients.

Sitting down with every client once a year and doing a review, and the review is not about the technology, the strategic review is about the business's future. What are you doing? What are you looking to do? What are you worried about? What do you want and what do you need? What expansion plans have you got? All of that kind of stuff. Most MSPS, when they sit down and have those conversations with clients, every single time an opportunity comes up.

This isn't selling, this is actually making someone happy, and the great thing is the more stuff you sell them, that they *choose* to buy from you, the longer they'll stay. There is an absolute direct correlation because it feels as though you are meeting their needs more often.

RT: That's fantastic Paul. And that script that you gave there, as simple as it is, I think you flipped the sales process round for most MSPs that I come across who were scared of selling, because they think they're trying to persuade somebody to do something.

In that little scenario you explained there, you are helping somebody to avoid something terrible happening to them. And why wouldn't they do it? You're just absolutely helping with them.

PG: I don't believe you can actually sell MSP services. I really don't. I think what you can do is you can educate people and give them space to think and give them space to feel.

It's like buying a car. We've all been into a showroom and looked at a car and the worst salespeople just want to show you all the gadgets, they want to get you out of the test drive, all of that.

I bought a new car a few weeks ago, and the sales guy was great. He was 70, he was the oldest sales guy there and he says, "I'm the most successful. I sell five times more cars. Do you know what my secret is?" I said, "No". He says, "I'm going to ask you lots of questions about the kind of car you're looking for."

It was a second-hand one from a big car supermarket and he said, "I'm going to, put you in front of a couple of cars and I'm going to leave you and you'll decide which one you're going to buy, but you will buy a car today".

And he was right. I've got a BMW five series, a lovely car, and I sat in it for 20 minutes, pressing buttons, and I bought that car in my heart before we even did the test drive. He didn't need to sell it and he was dealing with three people at once, which was fascinating to see him do it.

It's exactly the same for MSPs. If you find yourself having to sell it, you've got it wrong. All you've got to do is educate them about the problems or the benefits. It's like this 2020 thing - Microsoft in 2020 is having an end of life thing of Small Business Server 2011, Exchange 2010, Windows 7 - there's a whole bunch of stuff that's ending January 2020.

All you've got to do is have enough of the right conversations with people who are affected by this, which will be at least half your client base, and at some point, hopefully before they get to November 2018, they'll do something about it because you've educated them. Whereas right now they perceive there's no problem. We haven't got to sell anything, we've just got to keep telling them about it.

RT: Yes, it makes lots of sense. Yeah. Let's rewind a little bit and touch on something you mentioned earlier on. This is something I know very well for myself, and it's the idea that a book a really enables you to be perceived as an expert in your industry, whether you are or you're not.

I've got a couple of books out there. I'll leave the listeners to decide whether I'm an expert in my industry or not, but you're helping to educate your MSPs that you're working with, about

the idea of getting books out there. Explain that concept a little bit more, because I've seen some of the books that have come out and I've got to say I'm really impressed with them.

PG: Thank you very much. Books are amazing, because we place a value on them that's higher than you'd expect. I've written eight or nine books - I forget how many it is as I've actually written the same book nine times. Every time I go and work with the market, I rewrite the book for that marketplace and I'm quite open about that.
There's nothing beats a book for branding you as an expert, because the perception is that publishing a book is difficult. The perception is that you can't be an author unless you're the best and that it's expensive to write a book, and that's simply not the case.

You can take content or a book and put it in a PDF and it has zero value, because we've all got folders on our laptops absolutely chocker with PDFs. I'm subscribed to all the vendors' emails and I've got literally hundreds of the things but I haven't read any of them. And yet, the two or three things that I *have* read are the print things that are being sent to me by one or two select vendors that have decided to go that extra step.

This is why I started publishing books and publish my own books that I wrote about six or seven years ago. I have a book called "Updating Service Doesn't Grow your Business, which is for MSPs. It's free and we had 5,000 copies printed. There's about 3,000 still in a warehouse in Essex and it cost me 49 pence per unit, because we had them printed by a proper book printer, but I wrote the book and my designer designed it.

RT: You were kind enough to send me a copy. It's a great book and it's a great looking book as well.

PG: Thank you very much.

RT: It shattered my illusions!

PG: Professionals did it. That's the thing. I'm a trained writer from the start of my career, but if I wasn't I'd just get it ghostwritten. People Per Hour is the great place to go for ghostwriters, because there are more writers out there than there are people who want stuff written.

My designer is excellent, the book printers are excellent and you put all of this together and it's not a book, it's a business card. It's a 49p business card that you got and is probably going to sit on your bookshelf, because you were probably told as a kid just like I was, that books are precious. We don't damage books.

Even today, my eight-year-old respects books more than anything else. She'll destroy a £50 toy and think nothing of it, but a book, she's, gutted if she rips a book, if she accidentally tears a page or something.

The power of a book is positioning you as an expert. And with the MSP Marketing Edge, I give my clients a book every nine months or so. We made a bit of a mistake with the first one because everyone had the same title, so 90 versions of that book were knocking around.

The next one, which is due to come out in sort of autumn 2018, I'm not going to tell you just about yet because we're just finalising it, but everyone will have a different title.

The contents will be the same, personalised to each marketplace with different case studies, but it'll have a different title. What that allows my clients to do is to position themselves in their local area as an expert.

Imagine going to a networking meeting. I don't like networking meetings, but you can do business there and you turn up and there's two MSPs there, and to the average business manager or owner who doesn't know anything about IT support, they're the same business, whether they're any bigger or smaller.

One of them turns up with a book and says, well, I'm the author of this book called "XYZ" and I've got a copy for you. It's £9.99 or I can give you a copy for free. And it's a wholly different proposition because that person is an author.

My wife works for the BBC, she's a radio presenter as well. And lots of our friends are BBC luvvies, working out of London where the 24-hour news channel comes from. And nine times out of 10, they prefer their experts to be authors.

If someone's going to go and be interviewed on the BBC and they've got a book and it's on Amazon - by the way to get on Amazon, you just have to get an international standard barcode number – ISBN. All of my books are on Amazon, but you can't actually buy them from Amazon, it's just automatic.

If the author's on Amazon and they've written a book - it doesn't even have to be a bestselling book - they are more likely to get booked for the BBC. These are the best journalists in the country working there. It's just an instant expert brand. It's a huge thing to do.

RT: Yeah, I absolutely love it. I think it's a fantastic idea. And as with all of these fantastic ideas, it's so simple, and it surprises me that more people are not doing it. Let me take that idea a step further then.

We've talked about social media, we've talked about business networking, and we've touched upon those things. What about, what many MSPs perceive as old-fashioned or traditional marketing techniques such as direct mail? What do you think about those types of techniques?

PG: I love direct mail, because I don't know about you, but I get one bank statement a month which I keep for ID purposes, because I do property developing and I'm constantly talking to new solicitors. I get a HMRC letters and that's all I get at home, I don't get anything else.

Imagine the impact: you're sat at home or you're sat at your desk, you've got two or three brown envelopes and then an orange envelope turns up and it's got a stamp on it, someone's handwritten it and there's something bulky inside.

Which letter are you going to open first? It's going to be the orange envelope and that's the power of direct mail. In fact, compared to 10 years ago, it's really easy to stand out with direct mail and the cost doesn't have to be huge.

You've got services like Docmail, which is www.docmail.co.uk. It has a clunky interface, but great service. You've got Stammp – www.stammp.com and there's MailshotMaker, which is the Royal Mail service.

RT: We'll make sure all of those were in the show notes as well.

PG: Oh lovely. Thank you. There are probably other services I haven't mentioned. You can use an online service to do a cloud-based mail merge - you don't even have to get it done in your office anymore. I don't have any staff, having had 15 at my peak, I made a decision not to directly employ staff for a few years, so I've got loads of outsourced help but no staff.

I send out stuff all the time and we send out 3,000 postcards and I do that from Starbucks. Pressing keys on the computer and entering your credit card and it's all done for me, and do you know what - it's faster and cheaper. Direct mail: big thumbs up to that.

The ideal thing is, if you want to get new clients you build an audience. You find people to talk to, the relevant people. The more niche you can make your offering, the better. Niche doesn't have to be a sector or a vertical, it can be a job title.

I know of an MSP that only deals with financial directors for example, because that's a great audience for them. I know of MSPs that only deal with recruitment agencies or solicitors or accountants or engineering companies.

You find an audience and you niche it to make your message more relevant to them, because relevance increases results, and then you educate them using as many different methods as possible. They see some stuff on LinkedIn, you turn up in their Facebook, whether that's the feed or an advert.

They get some stuff from you in the mail, they get some emails from you. and you keep doing that. You know they won't read or consume all of them, but if you tried to touch them twice a month, multichannel, and in a year's time they may have read six to nine things that you've sent or had those interactions, they feel like they know you.

That's the power of this, and that's the power of things like having a book and building a database, and sending content out to people. People perceive that they know you before they ever speak to you. It's such a powerful but very long-term strategy. This doesn't give short term results, but in the long-term you, you literally become unbeatable.

In an area or a vertical or a niche, you become the go-to person, which is such a powerful thing. I'll give you an example. I was in vets, dentists and opticians for five or six years, and even now, today, when I haven't been in those sectors for two and a half years, just yesterday I had a phone call from a vet company in Ireland that wants me to go out and present to their conference.

The guy said, "I've got your book, sat on my desk. I've had that a couple of years now". He's had it six years. "I read your emails". I haven't sent an email for two and a half years, but I've been so front of mind that at that point he said, I've been meaning to book you for my conferences for years and now I can do it."

I didn't know who this guy was. I haven't communicated with this guy for two and a half years because I sold the business. I don't have the right to communicate with him anymore, and still he managed to track me down to book me to go and speak at his conference.

That's the power of that drip, drip, drip, drip, drip. Can you see what that would do to an MSP over a 10-year period?

RT: It's incredibly powerful. What frustrates you about MSPs? If you could ever find yourself in a position where you want to slap an MSP owner around the back of their head because they've said something that they believe is unique to them, but you know you see it with every MSP owner ever. What is that thing? What frustrates you about working with MSPs?

PG: Oh my God. It's such a long list! Probably the number one is the business owner being dragged into technical solutions. I appreciate when you were one- or two-man band, you can't get away from that, but I work with owners who will have first line, second line, third line - plenty of technical resource, and you'll catch them answering tickets or picking up the phone.

That makes me want to shake someone so hard. It's so hard to get yourself away from that. I talk about being trapped, about working *in* the business and how you need to spend more time working *on* the business.

My business grew dramatically when I spent more time working *on* it than *in* it. I was working on growing the business rather than doing the things that business does. Someone's got to do that, but it doesn't necessarily have to be you.

I think once you've freed yourself, and that's the hardest thing to do, from the day to day doing in the business, so many people then don't know what to do with that time and they find themselves just faffing and fiddling.

Doing things like reviewing 10 suppliers - let's not review 10 suppliers, let's get some marketing done. I think that's the biggest frustration, that people don't know what to do with their time having freed it, so they just go backwards.

Most of the MSP owners I know are techs, who built a business around being a tech, so they default back to that. You're better off actually going and spending time with your kids, going to the cinema or just going for a 10-mile walk.

I love going for 10-mile walks because it takes hours. If I go down a canal, I can't back out halfway through, I can't get a cab because I'm literally in a canal in between two towns!

It means I've got to commit and get through to the end of the walk, and you always end up at the end of it was a brilliant idea that just pops into your head that couldn't have done if you

were dealing with Facebook, emails, tech support tickets and all that kind of stuff. I think allowing themselves to be dragged back in is the biggest frustration.

RT: Absolutely. And I would share that frustration as well. I can't let you go, though, without touching on something that's not MSP-related, but incredibly important. You're a fellow Dr Who geek, the same as me, aren't you?

PG: Ah, Dr Who! Scrap the rest of the podcast and let's go and do a Dr Who podcast!

RT: Yeah, a Whocast!

PG: Let's do it! When I was a kid, it was good, but it wasn't that good, and then when it rebooted in 2005, my wife tolerates it and she'll watch it with me and it's become an occasion. And obviously we got Jodie Whittaker coming up soon as the new female doctor, which is just going to be brilliant. She's such a good actress.

I've visited the actual TARDIS set twice. If you and I can geek out for 10 seconds, I visited both of Matt Smith's. Do you remember they used to be the Dr Who Experience in Cardiff?

RT: Yes, I loved it.

PG: They used to do TARDIS tours as part of that, but about two years before that opened, I somehow managed to go and visit the actual TV set, where they used to film it somewhere obscure in the middle of Wales. I remember touching the TARDIS and it was just so magical.

Then bizarrely, a few years later, I met the guy who built that set, who was working with opticians, a business development guy working with opticians and he gave me a Dalek plunger or something like that.

RT: Wow!

PG: Let's talk more Dr Who! You really should do a DR Who podcast.

RT: Let's do another podcast just about Dr Who.

PG: OK, you answer this question for me. Who's your favourite doctor?

RT: I'll answer that in two ways. The first one, I'll say is 'my' doctor was Peter Davison growing up, the Fifth Doctor. My favourite doctor though is probably Tom Baker, so I'll go back and watch the Fourth Doctor episodes again and again and again.

PG: Your favourite new doctor?

RT: Favourite new doctor would be Matt Smith.

PG: Obviously you're wrong. David Tennant, every day.

RT: We are getting dangerously close to filling up this podcast talking about Dr Who, and perhaps some of our American listeners especially will be going, 'What?' We will draw a veil over that conversation there.

Paul, it's been an absolute pleasure talking to you. Thanks for sharing all the wisdom that you did. I couldn't agree more with a lot of the stuff that you're saying about how MSPs need to tackle marketing, and you're ideally positioned to help them with that.

If people want to find out more, I know we've got a special link, haven't we, for TubbTalk listeners. Tell us more about that. How do people get in touch with you?

PG: I've got this book which I've already declared cost me 49p to print, so might as well get it into the hands of more people. It is a paperback book written especially for MSPs. I know the link will be in the notes, but it's www.itsupportmarketing.co.uk/tubb and I'll send you a copy of the book. Well, I'll send it to English listeners and for American listeners and those around the world, there's a PDF. You're more than welcome to come and get a copy of that book.

RT: It's a great book, very professional, looks brilliant as well. Thank you for sending me a copy of that. I've really enjoyed our time today. I suspect you and I could sit down and talk Dr Who stuff let alone MSP stuff for hours and hours and hours.

I'm almost certain people are going to want you to come back on and talk more about not just Dr Who but marketing as well, so we'll have to sort that out some time in the future.