

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



INTERVIEW WITH JOHN KREMER

Susan Friedmann: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast where you learn proven strategies, tools, ideas, and tips from the masters. Hi, I'm Susan Friedmann, Owner and Founder of Aviva Publishing, and host of this exciting podcast. Every week, I introduce you to a marketing master who will share their expertise to help you market and sell more books.

Today, my guest mentor of the week, is Book Marketing Expert, John Kremer, who consults in all areas of book marketing. He's the best-selling author of *1001 Ways to Market Your Book*, *Book Marketing Magic*, and many other titles.

A fascinating fact that I just learned about John is that he provided the strategy that took Deepak Chopra from a vanity press author to being on the New York Times' best-seller list, not once, but eight times. Also, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, authors of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, credit John's book, *1001 Ways to Market Your Books* as the guiding light for their rise to best-seller status.

Personally, I believe this is truly the Bible of book marketing. I've used it many times to catapult my book sales.

It's a true honor to have you here as my mentor guest. Welcome to the podcast, John.

John Kremer: Hello. Thanks, Susan.

Susan Friedmann: John, let's start out by having you share just a few snippets of your background, and how you got into the book marketing business.

John Kremer: I got into the book marketing business as a frustrated author, as many authors have. Even back when I started out over 30 years ago, there just wasn't the opportunity to sell to publishers. There was a lot of competition, and there wasn't much opportunity to get published by book publishers. You often turn to self-publishing, which is what I did.

I come from a marketing background because I helped a friend launch a gift and toy business, and so I did a lot of his different pieces of

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marketing. I got a lot of background because I wasn't just working in distribution into the gift stores and so on, but I was also creating catalogues, doing premium sales, and a lot of other little facets of marketing that ultimately were useful in knowing how to market books as well.

Susan Friedmann: It sounds as if you and I have some similar backgrounds. I was a frustrated author who wanted her book published, and because I was in a niche topic, very few or no traditional publishers were really interested. I went ahead and published my own.

Let's talk about the number one challenge that you find that authors have marketing their book. What would you say that is?

John Kremer: I think it's probably actually their mindset. So many authors don't like the business of selling; they think it's crude, or hard, or tough, or just not right for somebody who's creating the great American novel, whatever it might be. Most authors don't like to market. That's okay. I don't like to market, but you have to, because the only way your book is going to sell is to get the word out there. There's probably 1 book in 1 million that just sells by itself. Most of them need help; they need people out there promoting the book. Generally speaking, that means that's the author that needs to get out there.

The one thing that authors have to do is change their mindset that: "I'm a writer," to: "I'm a writer and a marketer. I'm so happy with what I have to share that I want to share it with everybody, so I'm going to do what's necessary to make that happen."

Susan Friedmann: I love that. I quite agree with you. It's interesting, because when I work with authors, I find that they think they've just finished everything once they've written the book. They think that somehow it's magically going to market itself. I let them know that the work is just going to begin. Writing the book was the easy part.

John Kremer: In some ways. I know authors who took four or five years to write their book or even longer in some cases. Writing your book isn't necessarily the easy part. Sometimes marketing for some authors is the easy part, because all it is is talking about what you love. Ideally, you wrote a book that you really love, you love what you're writing about, and you want to share it. Then, marketing isn't that hard, but it still takes time,

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it still takes commitment. That's the part you're talking about, is that it does take consistent application if you want your book to sell.

What I always tell authors is you need to do at least three things every day for any book that you still love. If you end up writing 10 books and you're passionate about two of them, then those are the ones you market every day. If you're passionate about all 10, that's kind of tough, because it's hard to market 10 books by yourself, so you have to make decisions. Generally speaking, you're going to market the books that you love and your readers love, because they are the ones that are going to pay off in selling more books.

Susan Friedmann:

I love the word that you used, "consistent," because you're absolutely right. Consistency in marketing, never to give up, and to keep doing it. I love the fact to do three things every day.

Let's transition, and talk about planning your book marketing strategy, because I know you talk about that in your *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*. Let's talk about the strategy.

John Kremer:

The key thing, there, is you really need to have a clear idea of who you want to reach with your book. One of the big mistakes that authors make is they think everybody is going to buy their book, and the reality is very simple: Not everybody is going to buy your book. Even the best-selling book in the Western world, the Bible, there are still a lot of people that don't own a Bible. The fact that you think everybody is going to buy your book – well, it ain't happening.

Let's say you have a sewing book and you're targeting sewers, even then, if you get 20% of that marketplace, you're doing well. Every market probably has a hundred or a thousand books addressing that market. You're not going to sell to everybody because they already have three sewing books, and maybe that's all they need, until you convince them they need your book as well.

You have to believe that people need your book or will want your book in some way. You also have to define how that book is the best book for that audience. That's really crucial when you're making your marketing plan. You have to have a clear idea of what it is your book will do for people. Will it entertain them? Is it a good read? Will it instruct them? Inspire them? Enlighten them? Inform them? What will it do? You've got to come up with a clear statement of what that is.

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In marketing, they call it the “unique selling proposition,” or USP, but it is something you have to be very clear about.

It’s amazing how many times I’ll be talking to an author, and I’ll ask them: “What’s your book about?” and they’re hemming and hawing. I’m going: “Okay. Good luck.” Because you should be able to say, right away when somebody asks: “What is your book about?” or: “What will it do for me?” you’ve got to be able to answer those questions. That hem and haw has just got to come out right away.

Susan Friedmann: That’s interesting. The first question I ask authors is: What is your book about? You’re right, if it takes them 10 sentences or more, or even five minutes to tell me about the book, I’m already lost. I have no clue what this talking about.

John Kremer: Yeah, and everybody else will be. You can’t even do that if you’re doing a radio/TV interview, or even a podcast interview. You can’t take the time. In some ways, marketing is frustrating because you can’t tell people everything; you have to be selective. You may believe that your book is the next slicer and dicer, and will do everything for everybody, but the reality is you’ve got to pick one, two, three things that are most important, and then really flog those heavily. Of course, in making a marketing plan, you have to define your audience and how you’re going to reach that audience.

If you think you’re going to use all 1001 ways to market your books that are in my book, you’re insane. I’m sorry, but you pick 5 or 10 that will fit your personality, what you can afford to spend in marketing, what you can afford to spend in terms of your time in marketing, and then you pick the 5 or 10 that will work best for you, that meet your talent or the money you have to spend or the time you have to spend, and then you do those.

Susan Friedmann: That’s what I really love about the book, too, is it’s sort of like that smorgasbord, that cafeteria style you can pick and choose what you want to make up your dish. That’s fabulous.

I can’t stress enough that everybody should have this in their library: *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*. What edition are you on already? I think I have the sixth or the eighth edition. I have the sixth edition.

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- John Kremer: It can't be the eighth. It hasn't come out yet. No, send it to me, because that will save me from having to write it.
- Susan Friedmann: I've got the sixth edition.
- John Kremer: The sixth edition is the last one, but I'm actually working now on the seventh edition. When you have a 700-page book, it's a lot of work to do another edition. When you're doing a new edition, if you're really doing a new edition, it takes as long to write as to write an original book.
- Susan Friedmann: I can't even imagine. How many pages is this? 700 pages. Wow. That's quite something.
- Let's talk about some of the biggest mistakes that you see authors make. You mentioned one earlier, but let's go over some more. Give me two or three big mistakes that you see happen over and over again.
- John Kremer: One thing they do is they scatter their attention. They find a new bottle in the marketplace, and they go: "Okay, I'm going to go that direction." In today's world, a lot of your marketing is going to be done on the internet if you're a book author, but there's new marketing things on the internet every day. The thing is you can't pick up all the bottles and tie them out. You really have to be selective. You have to commit to doing the things that you think are going to be best for your book, and then you really have to work them hard. If there's one of them that you picked that just doesn't work for whatever reason, drop it, and then add maybe one more.
- I even have a client, a consulting client, he's just jumping all over the place. My main job is just to try to get him to focus. Then the thing is that he's not just consulting with me, he's consulting with four or five other people, and my job is always to get him back grounded because everybody's presenting him with a new bottle, something new to play with. I'm coming back and saying: "No. You've got to do this. We've talked about it before. This is what's going to work for your book."
- Pulling them back to what's working already, and continuing to use that. Then maybe, when you drop one of the others, then add something. You only have so much time in the day, you only have so much money in your bank account, you only have so many other people that may help

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you out. You really do have to be selective. I generally limit that to around five things that you're going to do for your book.

When I'm working with somebody on a marketing plan, my main focus is to help them find out what those things are going to be for them and their book, and the tools and things that they can bring to market their book.

Susan Friedmann: That would depend on their target market and probably their budget.

John Kremer: Their budget and how much time they have, because most authors underestimate. Another mistake they make is they underestimate how much time it's going to take to market their books, and do a good job with it. They're always crunched for time because they underestimate it in the beginning. You need to focus. You need to really think about what it is you're going to do.

I think that the consistency is so important. This is another mistake most authors make, they think: "If I market for the first two to six weeks of my book, then I can rest." The reality is that that's when you start to do the real work, because you still have to continue to apply.

My 1001 Ways to Market Your Books has been out for almost 30 years, and I'm still marketing it. What percentage of my audience have I reached? I probably reached maybe 30% at most.

Susan Friedmann: There are authors also coming out of the woodwork every day.

John Kremer: They come and they breed like rabbits. [Laughter]

Susan Friedmann: I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not, but it is what it is. The publishing industry has changed.

John Kremer: It's always good to have a market that continues to grow, it really helps. Even if you have a market of people who have to cook, there's always new people coming up, discovering cooking, and discovering the joy of collecting cookbooks.

Susan Friedmann: Talk a little about time. How long do you think it would take to really get it moving so that the book really has some exposure?

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John Kremer: Six to eight weeks in the beginning is a good time to think about: “Okay, I’m going to work full-time on marketing my book.” After that, you can think about: “Can I apply less time now and start working on another book?” You really should think at least six to eight weeks to launch a book, that’s the standard of most of the bigger publishers.

Then you still have to do the consistent, day after day, doing at least three to five things to continue to market that book. That means that you write a letter to somebody, you send out an email, you do a podcast, you do a video. There’s so many options in terms of what you can do. You also want to do the things that are really going to work for marketing your book.

Susan Friedmann: I’ve heard it said, though, that after three months, the book is dead. What do you have to say about that?

John Kremer: That’s a standard that most of the New York publishers use. If the book doesn’t take off in the first three months, they drop it. They’re publishing new books all the time, so they don’t have time to market a book that doesn’t have any legs. That’s why it’s so important. Even if you’re published by a publisher, you need to really focus in those first three months because you’ve got to get the book to start selling, or otherwise, the publisher is going to lose interest.

They do, they drop books all the time. The authors can still keep it alive, but the publisher... The case history, most publishers have what they call A-list titles, B-list, and C-list. The A-list titles are where they’re going to actually put money and time into marketing the book because it’s by somebody famous probably. The B-list titles are, if you’re lucky, you’re in that list; if you’re unlucky, you’re in the C-list title. You know you’re in the C-list category if the cover of your book isn’t that great, because it signals to everybody that the publisher isn’t spending much time on this book; they’re putting it out there and seeing what’s going to happen. B-list titles, they do some stuff, then if it picks up, then they’ll continue to market it.

That life of a book really depends on what the author does for the book, over and beyond anything that the publisher might do in terms of putting together an author tour, or anything like that.

When you get a contract from a publisher, the first thing that they’re going to send you at some point is an author questionnaire. In that

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author questionnaire, what they are essentially asking you, is: “Who is the market for your book, and how many contacts do you have in that marketplace? Do you know any editors, producers, etc., etc.? Do you have relationships with websites? Do you have a social media following? etc., etc.”

They’re going to watch you to fill out: “Here are the people that I know that may make a difference in marketing my book. Here are the things that I will do to market my book. Here are the things that I will help you do to market my book. Etc., etc.” That’s all in a good author questionnaire, and you really need to spend the time to fill it out.

Susan Friedmann: I know Wiley, in particular, wants you to have a very solid platform to market the book before they even accept the proposal. They even want you to buy a certain number of books, from what I understand as well.

John Kremer: Probably in today’s world, that’s what they’re doing.

Even some of the good small publishers. I talked to one publisher and he said: “I used to be able to publish a book that I fell in love with, but now I’m meeting with my marketing committee and they all want to know: What is the author’s platform?” He can’t publish a book if the author doesn’t have a platform.

The platform means that the author has some sort of readymade audience. Again, that could be a social media following, it could be that they have an ongoing podcast, or they have a lot of YouTube followers, or they get a lot of views of their videos. They may have a syndicated column, they may write for a magazine. Do they do a lot of speaking?

Any of those things is a platform, but a platform essentially is: you already have an audience of people that are ready and willing to buy your book when it comes out.

Susan Friedmann: Without a doubt. That’s why your book, *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*, is such a great resource because you don’t have to think of ways; you just have to go to your book and look at all the different opportunities that exist out there. You’ve done all the work for everybody, so thank you.

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John Kremer: Another mistake you already alluded to that authors make is they say: “Now I’m done writing my book, now I can do the marketing,” and that’s already too late. If you wait until the book is actually published, then it’s really too late. It doesn’t mean you can’t make up the time, but I always think the marketing begins when you have the idea for the book. That’s when you start to build an audience.

If you have an idea for a good cookbook, the first thing that I’d do is I create a blog or a social media personality that’s related to the cookbook that I’m going to create so that I start to build up a readymade audience, so that I start to build up that platform for that book. If you don’t do that, if you wait until your book is written, you’ve wasted a lot of time because while you’re writing the book, you can be building the audience and you can be building a significant audience.

I know one novelist that started podcasting his book, that means he started reading from it as he wrote the book. Before the book was even finished he had 80,000 people signed up for his podcast.

Susan Friedmann: That’s brilliant. I love it. That’s given me a wonderful new idea.

John Kremer: That’s what you do. He, again, had to be consistent. He applied to it, and built up something that really drew in an audience. That’s what you have to do. A lot of authors come out of being bloggers, so they basically have a passion and they create a blog, and they start writing and sharing, and then inadvertently, a lot of people stumble into it and they build up a big audience. Then they’re going to have publishers coming to them, saying: “Will you write a book for us?”

Susan Friedmann: I’ve seen that happen. I’ve definitely seen that happen.

It’s interesting how many times that my authors say to me: “I can’t start marketing the book until I actually have it in my hand,” and like you said, I tell them: “No, it’s such a waste of time, because you can already do some preselling, make some postcards of the cover of your book, and you can be selling it based on that.” You don’t have to physically have it in your hand in order to launch it.

John Kremer: When I brought out the *1001 Ways*, the first time it was called *101 Ways*, I actually presold it before I even began to write a word.

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I sent out a direct mail letter to my customer list, and I presold them three books. I told them I'd deliver the three books in six months.

Then I had to do it then.

Susan Friedmann: You're a savvy marketer.

John Kremer: I sold 1,000 or 2,000 presold, and so then I had to produce. I did it. I actually ended up producing about 800-900 pages of content in six months.

Susan Friedmann: Wow, that's pretty impressive.

One of the strategies that you teach in your book is how to make your book a best seller without breaking the bank. Can you give us one or two easy-to-implement strategies? I know we could have a podcast just on that one subject, but dangle the carrot in front of us.

John Kremer: There are a couple of really key ways to market a book that often will result in it being a best seller. One of them is to get out there and speak. Get out there and do readings. Get out there and start meeting people, and promoting your book. That really can make a lot of difference for your book. Especially in some categories: poetry, business, self-help, and novels all require the author to be out there, promoting the book. Memoirs are that way also. Getting out there and meeting people, and introducing them to your book.

You can choose how you go about speaking, but any best seller in the category of self-help and business in the past 20 years has become a best seller because the author has been out there speaking to places like Unity Churches, to business conventions, to other places. For poets, you just have to get out there and meet people wherever you can.

There was one black author that I know, he goes into the subway of New York City, and he rides the subway until he sells a case of his poetry books. He'll get up there, people are going to work or whatever, and he'll start reading his poetry. He does a nice job of it. He gets enough people interested, and says: "I've got books for you here." He'll keep riding the subway until he sells his case.

Susan Friedmann: What a great idea.

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John Kremer: The thing is a case of books a day is an incredible number when you add it up. I don't know how many books are in a case, but probably somewhere between 20 and 40, so he had to sell 20 to 40 books every day, and he wouldn't get off until he did. He usually was off by noon because he was good; he loved his book. There were enough captive audience there for him to sell it.

Susan Friedmann: Speaking is a great platform for authors. What else can they use?

John Kremer: I'm a firm believer in TV. I know that it's a limited opportunity, but in my experience, the authors that get on national TV are the ones that really persist in knocking on the doors. They don't give up after five rejections. They continue to pitch a new idea to the shows they think they should be on, whether it's *Today Show*, it's *Ellen*... Does Montel Williams still have his show?

Susan Friedmann: I'm not a television watcher, so I'm the worst person to ask for that kind of thing.

John Kremer: I don't either, so I don't know whether or not Montel was. When he was on, he always sold a lot of books because he loved books; he's a reader. In today's world there's so many talk shows out there, and so many interview shows, and news shows, and so on. I don't know how many cable channels there are now, but it's over 500.

Susan Friedmann: They're hungry for guests.

John Kremer: The thing is that they all have an audience. They may be very targeted. *The Food Network* is food lovers, and people who love to cook and entertain. There's other networks for men, and there's networks for I think there's an automobile channel. There's lots of opportunity to target and to get on.

I don't think that you have to think that you can't get on a show. You look at what they do in a show, and you figure out a way to pitch it. Back when Letterman was (I don't know if he's off the air yet, but he's going to be), he has the top 10 list. When I was pitching him, I pitched a top 10 list, and I tried to make it as funny as his top 10 list. It didn't work, but I would have kept trying. I would have refined, and refined, and refined; pitched it again, and again, and again. That's what you need to do.

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I know an author that was pitching *The Oprah Show*, and they were pitching them over and over again. Finally, Oprah calls one day on a Tuesday and says: “Can you be here on Wednesday?” She says: “Yes.”

Susan Friedmann: The hook, I think that’s what you said, the hook is so important. It’s not that you’re selling the book; it’s what’s inside the book and what that can do for the targeted audience, and that’s what they like.

John Kremer: Media are not interested in books. They’re interested in what can help or entertain or draw a bigger audience, essentially, to their show. If you can show them: “Here’s the show idea...” You can’t say: “Here’s the book, now figure out what to do with it,” because I guarantee you that they know exactly what to do with a book like that – it gets put aside and often tossed. I’m amazed how many authors tell me: “Yeah, I sent the book and they never got back to me.” I said: -“Did you send a letter with the book?” -“No.”

Me, I would never pitch a TV show by sending a book. I send a one-page letter or a one-page email. What it is is a very strong pitch on how I can make an interesting segment for their show. What I’m often doing when I pitch them is I pitch what they’ve done in the past week. I’ll say: “I know that you did very well with that. It was a very entertaining segment. The audience seemed to love it. Here’s what I could do. Here’s what I can bring to your show. They were tittering during your segment. I’m going to have them rolling in the aisles.”

Susan Friedmann: Holidays, basing it around holidays, too, often they’re looking for...

John Kremer: That can be a very effective pitch.

Susan Friedmann: They’re looking for pitches for that.

John Kremer: I did that for Letterman. I pitched him on the birthday of his show for something that I was pitching at the time. It was a perfect tie-in. He didn’t take it. I watched his birthday show, and I go: “Boy, they could have really could have used my segment.”

Susan Friedmann: Next time.

John Kremer: You have to believe that. You have to believe that you have something good to offer. If you do that, they’re going to pick up the phone and call

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you. You never know when it's going to happen. I actually had a producer from Oprah call me once for one of my books. They asked me to send the book, I sent it. They didn't really tell me what the segment was so I couldn't quite pitch it to them, how they would use my book for it, so they didn't, but I tried. It actually didn't obviously match what they were thinking.

Susan Friedmann: As you say, another time. We're quickly running out of time talking about time. If you could give our listeners one golden nugget, what would you leave them with? What would you give them, John?

John Kremer: The key lesson I keep trying to teach every marketer, whether they're a book author or selling another product, is you have to create relationships. That is the most important thing you can do. That essentially means you're making friends. You make friends with TV producers. You make friends with bloggers. You make friends with websites that are targeting your audience.

In today's world, probably the best thing you can do is to become a Q&A columnist on a very popular high-traffic website targeted to your audience because the column would write itself and would give you multiple exposures to that audience. Let's say that you have a business book, you can write for www.Forbes.com, and they have like 1,000 people that write for them. Many of them are just people that are experts or knowledgeable in the field that they've invited to blog for them. If you could do a Q&A column where you have the readers send in the questions and then all you do is answer them, you could easily do one column a week that would be targeting your audience every week, week after week after week, and probably build your column to be one of the more popular columns on www.Forbes.com.

Susan Friedmann: People love Q&A. That's a wonderful idea. John, you have been an amazing guest mentor. How can listeners find out more about your incredible services?

John Kremer: Right now, the best website you should go to would be my www.BookMarketingBestSellers.com. That's where I blog all the new content that will ultimately end up in the new edition of my book. I blog there actively. You can reach me by email through there, and you can sign up for my newsletter which is a key way that I educate people.

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Every author should have an email newsletter. They should have a tool on their website for capturing people's names and email addresses, because that's probably one of the most effective ways to market in an ongoing way, and remind the people who have bought your book already to talk to their friends about your book.

Susan Friedmann: Give us that website one more time.

www.BookMarketingBestSellers.com

www.BookMarketingBestSellers.com. John Kremer, author of *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*, thank you so much for being such an incredible guest.

Tune in next week when we'll have another amazing mentor. Thank you for listening.