

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



INTERVIEW WITH MARK SANBORN

Susan Friedmann: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast where you learn proven strategies, tools and ideas and tips from the masters. Every week I introduce you to a marketing master who will share their expertise to help you market and sell more books.

Today, my extra special guest mentor of the week is leadership guru Mark Sanborn, CSP, CPAE. Mark is an international best selling author and noted authority on leadership service and extraordinary performance. He's the author of eight books and his best selling book, *The Fred Factor*, has sold more than 2 million copies and has established him as the expert on turning the ordinary into the extraordinary in business and in life. Without further ado, get ready to have your thinking challenged and expanded as you learn from an internationally recognized leadership expert, my friend and colleague, Mark Sanborn, CSP, CPAE. Mark, welcome to the show.

Mark Sanborn: Thank you, Susan, so nice of you to invite me to be a guest.

Susan Friedmann: I love having you. Mark before we tap in into your marketing expertise especially obviously as it relates to your best selling books. Would you share with our listeners the meaning of the letters after your name, CSP and CPAE and why they're so important to you

Mark Sanborn: Well CSP stands for Certainly Speaks Periodically. No, I'm just kidding. It doesn't stand for that. It means Certified Speaking Professional. It is a designation that is earned by members of the National Speakers Association and for anyone who is a writer or an author who either speaks or would like to speak. I highly recommend an organization you and I both have been a member of for many, many years, NSA. Nsaspeaker.org, of course, is the website. Now, the last four letters, CPAE, initially stood for a very complicated Latin phrase, but it has now been changed to Council of Peers Award of Excellence. It's the speaker hall of fame.

That is a bestowed honor. You earn the CSP, but if you work hard and get recognized by your peers, you can then be awarded the speaker hall of fame CPAE. The reason that's important for me is not just the recognition from my peers and colleagues and friends in the business, but because I'm kind of unique in that I didn't start as a writer or an author and become a speaker. I've been a speaker first and foremost for

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



my entire career and writing was secondary. It was very important obviously, but the tip of my arrow, the way that I go to market is first and foremost as a professional speaker who shares ideas that help people learn to lead or lead better.

Susan Friedmann: That's wonderful. Yes, I'd like to tap into some of that speaking expertise, as well. Mark, it's every author's dream to have a best selling book. Since you have sold nearly 2 million copies of your book, you must be doing something right. Do you have a specific formula or guidelines that you could share with our listeners?

Mark Sanborn: Well, certainly life is easier understood looking backwards, but in all honesty I certainly hoped and dreamed I would be a bestselling author, but I fully expected it. I know that may fly in the face of positive thinking and expectations, but I'm kind of a realist. I'm pretty stoic in my orientation. My formal education is in Economics and I just knew that the odds of becoming a true bestselling author, not as defined by having a book that was on the top ten list for one hour on a sub category on Amazon. That's a different kind of bestselling author and it's a very different approach to the business. As someone who sold enough books that those books would rise to the top of a list as Fred did, The Fred Factor stay there for on and off for nearly two years, I really didn't expect it. I just had this crazy idea that if I wrote a really good book and used the right partners to market it that it would do well and I just am most grateful and blessed that it was a bona fide bestseller. I had a second bestseller. It did not sell nearly as many copies but listed on and off for a period of months called You Don't Need A Title To Be A Leader. I'm not a greedy guy. I'd love to have another bestseller, but if I don't I'm just grateful and blessed that I had two.

Susan Friedmann: I believe you've got a new one out The Fred, what is it? Fred 2.0?

Mark Sanborn: Yes.

Susan Friedmann: Tell us a little bit about that and what you're doing to market that.

Mark Sanborn: Of course, it's really interesting to consider. If you have a best selling book, writing any kind of a follow up is one of the most daunting challenges an author has. I'll tell you why. First, you want to write to the people who bought your first book and obviously embraced it, but you don't want to be redundant. The easy thing is to revise something, but I didn't want to revise because I had too many readers asking me to go deeper and wider in what I wrote next. It's an all new book. The second

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



problem though, is that an all new book then runs the risk of either leaving your fans behind, or creating the perception by new readers that they didn't read *The Fred Factor* so they certainly can't read *Fred 2.0*. In other words, it can become a disincentive. You have to write the book in such a way that it stands alone on it's own merit, but that it still appeals to the people who like your work.

What I did to launch *Fred 2.0* was really quite different than many other books that I've launched and that is we put together kind of a fan base. People that were almost a council, if you will, or an advisory board. They just so embraced the message of *The Fred Factor* that they were willing to use their contacts and their connections in social media to get the word out. Of course, we provided them with a lot of information, some ancillary material about the book. At the end of the day these were very committed people who said, "You know, we like your work enough to help you launch your next book." It was gratifying that there were that many people were willing to throw in, you know, in the category of somewhere upwards of a hundred people.

I'm very grateful, if any of those people happen to be listening, I'm eternally grateful that they were willing to lend their support to launch that book. Now *Fred 2.0* hasn't done anywhere nearly as well as *The Fred Factor* and that's not unusual. Rarely do sequels surpass the first book, but the sales have been strong and I've been gratified as much by the fact that I brought some new ideas to people that really wanted them. About how to go deeper in their business and lives with this philosophy.

Susan Friedmann: I was actually one of your marketing team for *Fred 2.0* and I was blown away at how organized that whole campaign was and the fact, as you said, you gave us all the materials to make it easy for us to help you. I think there's a lot to be said about that. The thinking that through and planning it, planning that strategy was brilliant.

Mark Sanborn: Well, I had help from a guy named Daniel Decker who does this for a living. He helps with his template because I wish I was, you know, I knew everything and was that clever. He was the one who helped by organizing the putting together the group, which you were a part of, and then providing the forum because really that's what it takes. It takes a forum where you can communicate directly with either by email or webinar or by whatever means available with those people that are going to support you.

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



Susan, you made a really important point that it's got to be easy for people to help you. These are friends, not your employees, and if you don't make it really easy, they don't have the time or the wherewithal. They're running their own businesses, living their own lives. I'm glad that you said that we made it easy because that's really, I think, the key to making that kind of a promotion work.

Susan Friedmann: Yeah, no, absolutely. Every time I'm asked by, often it's our speaker colleagues who are launching a book, that when they do supply the materials to do the marketing for them, then it's like it's a no brainer. I just have to slot it into wherever I want to slot it, but if anyone just says, "Well, help me market my book. The title is ... and you can buy it from Amazon at this link." I'm like, you know I don't know that I've got the time to sit there and write this email message or Facebook post for you, so yeah.

Mark Sanborn: Imagine if your physician said to you in an office call, "Hey, would you help me market my business?" First of all you'd be shocked, but the second thing you'd say is, "How in heaven's name can I do that?" On the other hand, if your doctor said "We just opened a new nutritional center here in our building. If you know anyone that has an interest in nutrition I hope you'll recommend it." That's a whole different thing. You're right. When I get the email, as I do on a daily basis, to help promote a book ... I think it's, Susan, two important things that we need to bring out here. Number 1 is, I know that we say, "Be brave and cold-call people." We live in the age of relationship. If I don't either know you or don't think you've written a good book, it's a little bit presumptuous to ask me to endorse and/or promote your book. I always tell people I have a brand, limited as it may be, and if I start endorsing a book that isn't good and a fan of mine reads that book on my recommendation, my credibility suffers. I think there needs to be some kind of a pre-existing relationship even if it's through a third party. I also think it's incumbent upon someone who wants you to promote their book. They've written the book, but you feel good about promoting.

I always say, "Hey, do you have a landing page and do you have any social media Tweets or Facebook postings?" Now, what I do is, if I decide to promote someone's book I will adjust that Tweet. I don't just run verbatim what they send me. I'll say, "Hey, my pal Susan Friedmann has written a great new book. Check it out." I won't use that generic Tweet that someone sends that looks like a generic Tweet. I don't want to have to figure out well where should them? Should I send a potential buyer to Amazon? Is there a landing page? Is there a website? It goes

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



back to what we've said redundantly, but for emphasis, you got to make it easy.

Susan Friedmann: Yeah. That's absolutely true. What suddenly came to mind as you were saying that and making it easy was that you know, I have, as you know, a publishing company and I work with independent authors all the time. One of the challenges that they come to me with is how do we get endorsements, testimonials for this book? Do you have any kind of guidelines or formula for that?

Mark Sanborn: We talked offline about a potential interview with Susan RoAne, who is a mutual friend of ours. Susan was at an NSA panel that I was on and she stood up and said something that got a big laugh but I really liked. She said, "You know, sometimes people come to me and say what do I do? I have a book inside of me." She says, "Well, maybe that's where it should stay." I say that because the one thing I really caution against, and I'm bit of a contrarian, is I don't think the good reason for writing a book is to have a book. I really don't. Certainly there was a time I might have believed that because that's an accepted marketing and thought leader tactic to write a book. Books last a long time. If you write a bad book you may become a better writer but that bad book will still be out there. Whether it's on the used bookshelf at Goodwill Industries or not is debatable.

I always say don't ever do anything without a real commitment to do it well. If you really want to have a best selling book, and this sounds so obvious is to be painful, write a really good book. Once you've done that, then ask a simple question, in terms of getting endorsements, and that is, "Who would really dig reading this book? Who would enjoy it? Who would like it?" You may send me a book on diversity, but that's not really my expertise. I certainly know a little bit about diversity, but when somebody sends me a book on leadership or some research they've done on leadership or new aspects of leadership, that's in my wheelhouse. I'm much more predisposed to give that book a look.

The second thing I would say is, if you send somebody a book and say, "Listen I don't know you from a box of rocks. I think you'd like my book. Here's why. I enclosed it with my compliments." I think that might be where you stop. As soon as you add that last paragraph, "And of course if you like my book, I hope you'll give me an endorsement." I think that might be better served in a different follow up letter in two weeks or a week or even an email that says, "I don't know if you've had an opportunity to read my book. If you have and you have any feedback

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



for me, or you'd be willing to give some words of endorsement, I'd be most grateful." Then stop, because if it's a good book, and the person is willing, they will because it's really easy then in that email to do that. Again, that's for someone that you don't have a direct and/or personal relationship with. If you're swinging for the home run, and it's somebody that you'd really like to have as an endorser, that's how I would probably go about approaching it.

Susan Friedmann: Yeah. I just read something recently is that like you've rightly said, is don't ask somebody who has no relationship to that book in terms of the industry, the topic matter, so yes. It's find people in the industry or, as you say, experts on the topic that would be willing to potentially endorse the book.

Mark Sanborn: Here is another idea and that is, don't ask a successful author for an introduction to their literary agent. Again, I'm not in the majority when I say this but you know, it's kind of like asking somebody if can date their wife or their husband. Because that relationship, they're difficult to establish and my literary agent has point blank said, "Mark, don't make introductions. We know who we're looking for. We have a very prescribed profile of who we want to represent." Now have I ever violated that? Well, I'm good friends with my literary agents. Once in a blue moon, if there's something that I think is just such a great opportunity they might miss it, I will on my own initiative mention it to them. But when somebody says to me, "Will you introduce me to your literary agent?" I said, "A, I won't. B, I can't. C, I will quickly tell you how to go about getting a literary agent," and of course, that's not always well received because it takes a lot of work. I think getting a good literary agent in many instances is nearly as difficult as writing a good book. It really is a lot like dating and getting married because it's a long process and for all of the hundred of thousands of literary agents there are and all the hundreds of millions of authors there are, finding the right fit is really challenging.

Susan Friedmann: That brings up a good point, too because are all your books published through traditional publishers?

Mark Sanborn: My last five are. I have done one self, well, I take that back. I've done a couple of collaborative books that will be self-published with some friends early on in my career. I've personally done one self-published book by myself, but my last five books and then two books prior to that were published by traditional publishers.

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



Susan Friedmann: Your views on going one route versus the other. Do you have any strong feelings about that?

Mark Sanborn: This is a good conversation to have over cocktails because it's a ... You know I don't. I will answer, I'll hedge my answer a little bit and say it depends. One of the things you have to ask yourself is what do you want your book to do? Now, we already talked about the importance of writing a good book, so let's assume that's a given. What do you want the book to do? Do you want to use the book as a marketing piece? Do you want to be visible in major outlets? For instance, Hudson's bookstores at the airports, because for some authors that's more valuable than the number of books that they sell. I know of at least one author who has a central plank in his marketing strategy to always be present in Hudson's bookstores because his topic is one that an executive rushing through the airport is likely to be interested in. Do you want your book to be a public relations piece for your firm? I have a friend right now who I think is very innovative social entrepreneur and I'm working with him to potentially help him with a book. Not as a co-writer, but to get him lined up with the right resources because I think the message of his philanthropy needs to get out there.

The best question to ask is, "What do I want my book to do?" Then reverse engineer the answer. If you need a book, and it needs to be released in a very timely manner, then self publishing is a viable alternative. Even the best publishers, if they rush a book short of a book that's the rare anomaly about for instance, a presidential candidate or something like that. Most publishers are looking at very least a year more likely two years from the time you turn in your manuscript until the book is published. That's a kind of a 30,000 foot overview but it goes back to the answer I started with and that is, it all depends. There are pros and cons for doing either.

Susan Friedmann: Thank you, that's very helpful. I like the idea of really looking at what do you want the book to do. I've read over and over again that there are very few people who really make a lot of money out of their books.

Mark Sanborn: I've seen the data and it's one of those kind of nebulous terms that most only 5% of books sell more than five or ten thousand copies. The point is that most books, if they sell five or ten thousand copies, are considered moderately successful. Anything north of that is considered a pretty solid hit. Especially for a first time author.

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



- Susan Friedmann: Mistakes, let's talk about mistakes you've made. I know there're not very many knowing you, but what are some of the things you've done over the years that we could possibly learn from? As it relates to marketing obviously and maybe even more specifically book marketing.
- Mark Sanborn: Well, I've made plenty of mistakes. I've just been so stoic that I didn't get too worked up about it so some people missed it. I think that, I don't want to sound like I'm beating a dead horse, but I wish I would have been more patient and worked more on my writing for my earlier books, especially. I certainly got caught up in that you need to have a book. My first book, really, I did because I wanted to build my business. I wrote a book on team building. It was published by a traditional publisher, a very small house in New York. In retrospect, what I wanted that book to do was to position me, and it did. It did not sell a great deal except for the books I sold to my clients and in the back of the room. I have a few books and as I look back I just cringe a little bit. I did the best I could at the time. For instance, this is of course debatable and deferred to people who've read both books, but Fred 2.0 is a much better written book. It sold far less than The Fred Factor. There is a certain quality to any book that if the story, if the plot, if the narrative is powerful enough you can overcome mediocre writing.
- I think that the goal, obviously, is to write a good book well. The only way you do that is by writing a lot. Susan, when you and I first met many years ago, you're much younger than I am of course, I grew up during the Jurassic Period, there was no blog. Nobody blogged and you had a newsletter. That's literally how I first got my first book deal. I wrote an article, put it in envelopes and send it out to people. Very sophisticated. Believe it or not an acquisition editor saw the article and said, "I think you can write. Do you have a book idea?" That was my first book on team building.
- Having said that, today one of the reasons I blog and Tweet is because it makes me a better writer. If you commit to doing two Tweets a day and one blog a week, you will over time, especially if you're trying to, become a better writer. It's pretty hard not to. The reason why I like Twitter, and I don't really think Twitter is a ... I think it's a great way to stay in touch with your fan base and your followers. It's not a high level marketing tool, but what it does is it gives me a chance to test ideas. Sometimes I'll have this little sound byte of an idea and I'll think, "Oh, this is clever," and I'll put it up and it falls flat. Nobody re-tweets it, nobody favorites it. Other times, I'll have an idea that I will put out there and I think it's a good idea but I don't really see it as having great deal of potential, and it keeps coming back like a boomerang.

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



Susan, I'll give you an example that in one of my books, I think in *The Fred Factor* I said, "If your motivation for doing something is to be recognized and rewarded, you'll often be disappointed." The reason that I wrote that is because I didn't want people to see *The Fred Factor* as some kind of gimmicky way to get ahead. Right? Help people out so that they'll help you out and pay you more money, because frankly if that's your motivation you'll probably be disappointed. That's probably the Tweet that has come back more times over the last five or six years than anything else I've ever written. I don't quite get it, expect that it must resonate with people at some level, but if you'd have said, "Mark, pick a Tweet that's going to be big," that one would have not made my list.

Susan Friedmann: How interesting. You just never know. I love it and I'm sure you've had it a million times is the fact that people come up to after a speech and they say, "Oh, you changed my life." Sometimes they don't even remember what it was that you said that changed their life, but something that you said and it's like, "Okay." You just never know what's going to resonate with people.

Mark Sanborn: You don't and really, I mean, I'm grateful that people think that. People change their own lives. I think that what we can do is give them the ideas and encouragement they need. Nobody's life changes without them doing something about the idea that they heard in the speech or read in the book. I want to give them credit. Sometimes people underestimate themselves. What they're saying is you gave me a tool, you gave me an action, you gave me a philosophy and you gave me hope. That's really at the highest levels what makes writing and speaking exciting. If you look at it as just a business, that's fine. You can run any business as a business. When you have a chance to make money and meaning. When you feel good about the product that you produce. That's icing on the cake.

Susan Friedmann: I love that. I love it, absolutely. I couldn't agree more with what you've said. It's interesting that we've got very similar history in terms of books. When I first joined NSA one of our masters in the industry said to me, "You've got to write a book." I asked for a pearl of wisdom. He says, "Write a book. It doesn't matter if it sells or not, but you're a published author." I took that to heart but I wanted it to do something. Obviously, I worked very hard so that it was something that I could be proud of. Yes, knowing what you want the book to do for you and how you can serve other people is just like number one. I think if you keep that focus it's really critical.

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



- Mark Sanborn: Susan, it's become apparent to me though, when we got that advice so many years ago at NSA, that what they were saying back then really was, in a sense, true and I'll tell you why. Most people that I know got a college degree. Many of them are not using the college degree in the work that they're doing now. We have recognized for a very long time, especially if you've hired anyone and I've had an opportunity to hire many people over the years, that the college degree signifies that you were willing to do the work. If the degree was in Economics and you're interviewing to be an Economist, that's even better. Really, what you're looking for is someone that for four years, or however long it took them, was able to focus, apply themselves and do the work. That's the credibility of the degree at base level.
- If you look at writing a book 30 years ago it was hard because there were very few vanity presses. There were not editors easily hired on Elance or Upwork. There weren't places that you could get your book published inexpensively. In a way, what that mentor said way back then made sense because if you wrote a book it said to your market place, I was willing to do the hard work. They knew that it may not sell because getting a bestseller is hard, but at least it showed that you did the hard work. Fast forward the tape to 2015. You can have a book out there tomorrow. There's a site you could go to right now, they would ask you some questions, you could spend the next two hours answering them and tomorrow they would overnight you a book. That's how easy it's become.
- Susan Friedmann: Wow.
- Mark Sanborn: That credibility of doing the hard work is no longer there. When you see a book that's badly written or quickly written, it takes away from credibility, it does not add to it.
- Susan Friedmann: It's interesting, too that as a speaker, as a celebrity of any kind everyone's got a book. There's a sort of an expectation now, I think, in the market place, that if you are anyone that you have to have a book.
- Mark Sanborn: Well, I'm thinking about that because ...
- Susan Friedmann: Many of them are ghost written, as we know.
- Mark Sanborn: I think there's an alternative. I think if you publish regularly ... I'm sometimes amazed at how an author who sold a lot of books, when I go to their blog the last blog they posted was April 2012. I think that you

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

Helping authors get their books noticed!



can become very credible by writing an ongoing blog that's really, really good. Maybe, over time, that will be the basis, or at least the motivation to write a book. I would just flag people off from doing something as a need to reflex.

Susan Friedmann: Wow, so much to think about, Mark. I knew that you were going to rattle the cage and you certainly did. As we bring this to a close, what's the best way for our listeners to buy your books or find out more about the services you offer?

Mark Sanborn: Well, to find out more about me, Mark Sanborn, marksanborn.com, is the mothership for all my work and our various websites. We do offer our materials through there, but of course, good old Amazon and Barnes & Noble online and Barnes & Noble's Bricks-and-Mortar, but especially the online stores you can get any of my books. Of course, if you just want to tire kick my ideas and see what I write about and think on regular basis my blogs, my Tweets and fan page at Facebook, those are all places to go and those are accessed through marksanborn.com.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent, and if you were to leave our listeners with a pearl of wisdom what would that be?

Mark Sanborn: Well, I wish I could come up with something really catchy and gimmicky and clever and exotic and sexy, but I will just say; write a lot, write regularly, pay attention to how you do it and work hard to do it better. That will make you a good writer and that, then is a foundation for launching good blogs, good books, good speaking career, all the rest.

Susan Friedmann: Keep it simple and those are the best advice. It's always the best advice is just to keep it simple. Mark, thank you so much for being my guest today. Thank you all for taking your precious time out of your day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it sparks some ideas you can use to sell more books. Wishing you much book marketing success.