

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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HOW TO USE YOUR BOOK TO MARKET YOUR SPEAKING BUSINESS

INTERVIEW WITH PHIL VAN HOOSER

Susan Friedmann: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast where you learn proven strategies, tools, 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 special guest mentor of the week is leadership guru Phil Van Hooser. Phil has taught his proven leadership skills nationally, and internationally. He's built a successful career developing and marketing customized leadership programs, and most recently, he masterminded a comprehensive leadership development program called Leaders Ought to Know. He's the author of 4 best selling books. He's honest, trustworthy, genuine, and I'm extremely proud to call a dear friend. Phil, welcome to the show.

Phil Van Hooser: My, my, my, thank you Susan. I'm glad to be here. Thank you for that wonderful introduction.

Susan Friedmann: Great. Phil, you've got so much experience, and I know that we could talk about so many things. Let's focus on the way you have used your books in your marketing mix. You've got 4 of them. How have you used them?

Phil Van Hooser: Susan, like many people who were novice, or neophyte authors and writers, my initial intent and dream was to be a best selling author in the same vein maybe of Stephen King, or from the business standpoint at least. I saw myself as selling millions of copies of books. That's just not been the reality for me, but the book is still been a wonderful, or the books have still been wonderful tools that I've been able to use in my business.

The primary way that I use the books, at this particular moment in time, is to build credibility, and open doors with individuals and prospects that I'd like to make a connection with, that I'd like to share more information with, professionally of course. The multiple books, are wonderful ways for me to be able to accomplish that goal.

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- Susan Friedmann: Now when you do that, do you just send them a copy? What's the process?
- Phil Van Hooser: It all depends on the circumstance of course. Let's assume for example that I'm in the process of trying to market specifically to a company. If I can make a contact with them, or even if I can't make a direct contact, I might send a book as an intro with a note that says, heard a lot about your organization, think we might have something that we could partner on. Here's a sample of my work and my philosophy, for example. If I'm talking about leadership, I'll send the Leaders Ought to Know book. If I'm wanting to talk to them about customer service, I'll send my customer service book. I can do it that way, sort of a cold call and it serves as a tool of introduction.
- Let's assume, I travel a lot, like you do. Let's assume I meet someone on an airplane, and you've got 2 hours from point A to point B. You end up talking about what do you do? I ask them of course, what they do? In the process, I'm going to mention that I'm a writer. If I have a book with me, I'll give them a copy right then. If I don't, when I get back to the office, I'll write them a note and say, "It was wonderful meeting and talking with you. I think we have some things in common. Here's a book to consider. Maybe you'd like to buy copies for your management team, or maybe I can even come in and do a talk for your group."
- I use it in a very loose way. In the most simplistic form, I would tell you, it's the best business card I could have. Since most of my books are self-published books, the reality of it is, it's not terribly expensive either, yet it leaves a lasting memory. They're not going to throw a book away, where they might throw something else, a packet, or a brochure, but they're going to hang onto the book and hopefully read it.
- Susan Friedmann: With that, let's go to the next step. Would you then follow up afterwards? How would you continue that relationship?
- Phil Van Hooser: I would certainly attempt to. It all depends on how willing, or how available they are. Most people are. I found that when you are generous with people, people want to reciprocate. They want to be generous with their time, or their energy, or their information. I'll be honest, we're a relatively small organization. There's 2 people that work in our organization, and sometimes I get overwhelmed with responsibilities, or obligations, and I don't follow up as well as I should, or as often as I should.

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Susan, you know my wife Susan works in the business as well. Susan is much better at being methodical in that follow up than I am. A quick telephone call, or a note, or an e-mail to someone telling them that, "I hope you've enjoyed the book." Not asking them if they read the book, but I hope you're enjoying the book, sometimes is just enough prompter for them to maybe read a chapter or 2, where they wouldn't have so that they could respond in some sort of practical way.

Do I follow up? Yes. Remember, I'm doing it more for the purpose of selling my presentations than I am selling my books. I'll give you an example that happened just yesterday in fact. A client of mine called, this is a client that I worked with over the last 7 or 8 years, just called out of the blue and said, "Phil, we're creating an intern program, a retreat for interns that we're going to be using in our company in the next year. We'd like for you to come and do a training session for them." I said, "Sure." They knew my work, so it wasn't a real hard sell. I said, "Sure, I'd love to."

We negotiated the fee, had everything in place, we were good to go. Then I said, "Oh by the way Bill, you're going to have 60 interns here, you're trying to teach them leadership skills. Wouldn't it be appropriate for you to buy a copy of my Leaders Ought to Know book for all 60 of them?" It was the easiest sell and it worked out to be, the book sells for about \$20, we discounted it down to \$15 for them, and we sold 60 of them, that's a \$900 sale, and it took me about 30 seconds to negotiate that sale.

Now that's how the book works for us. They called to talk to us about our programs, and the book is a way of reinforcing the program, and keep the learning opportunity going after the program is over.

Susan Friedmann: That's brilliant. That's absolutely brilliant, because yes, it can be such an easy sell, that sort of add on with those books, and you've got them available, so yes, why not? Great. I'm thrilled that you said that.

Phil Van Hooser: Let me add one more thing to that Susan. Most of us have our books on Amazon, or other delivery mechanisms, and we don't have any control how they are discounted, and so on and so forth. One of the things that I found, when I'm at presentations, or I'm talking to people, or marketing directly to individuals or corporations. I say, "You know our books are available in all the regular book purchasing spots, Amazon, or whatever it may be." I said, "But, if you're interested you can contact us directly and we will be sure to autograph, and personalize any books

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that you want, regardless of the number." As a result, when they call us, we don't discount too heavily, or as heavily as some of the others, so I'm able to make a little bit more money, even though I have to autograph and sell, but it also gives me ... Or autograph and personalize, but it also gives me an opportunity to up sell to other programs, and other things that we've got going on as well.

I've signed lots, and lots, ad lots of books, but I've sold more books because I've been willing to sign them, and they can't get that through other means.

Susan Friedmann: Brilliant. Talking about that, let's look at the Leaders Ought to Know Initiative, which you just masterminded. I know that you've created lots of different materials for that program. Where did the book fit into that, your Leaders Ought to Know book, did it come first, did the program come first? Talk to us about that.

Phil Van Hooser: Sure. First of all, the "Leaders Ought to Know" initiative, let's just talk about it for just a second in the terms of it's holistic approach. The Leaders Ought to Know Initiative is the sum total of my professional research, my professional content development, and my professional experience over the last 30 years let's say. It wasn't one of those things that I just woke up one night and said, "Okay, I've got this material, I want to write a book, or I want to start this initiative." This is the sum total of the material, content material that I had been developing for 30 years. I thought, how could I repurpose this material in such a way that I can get multiple effect out of it, or multiple benefit from it?

I just happened to be at the National Speaker's Association Convention a couple of years ago and I ran into a book publisher, a publisher who had published one of my earlier books. He asked me the question. He said, "So Phil, what are you working on?" I said, "Well, I'm working on a leadership book." Mind you Susan, I didn't have an outline. I didn't have anything. I had in my mind, that if he were interested in a leadership book, I could certainly write it, because I had this material out there. I just didn't know how I would organize it. He said, "What title do you have?" I said, "Well, I like the title Leaders Ought to Know, because there's some things that I believe leaders ought to know." He goes, "Tell me more about it." I just outlined some of the things that I talk about in my normal program.

The long and the short of it is, he said, "I like it." He said, "Can you give me a proposal?" I said, "No, I'm not going to give you a proposal unless

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you can give me pretty good indication that this is a book that you're willing to buy." He said, "I'll tell you right now, if you get me a proposal, based on what you've told us right now, and based on our history with you in the past, we'll buy this book." Then I said, "Well let me ask you another thing, when can you get it out?" He said, "If you can get that proposal to us within 2 months, I'll have a book out in 9 months."

Okay, now we have a time frame. I immediately, I had to write the book of course, but I also parallel to that, started thinking, what else can I do with this book when the book comes out, and that's where our Leaders Ought to Know online virtual training program came. I immediately started changing my whole branding process, from what was previously Van Hooser Associates, my last name, to Leadersoughttoknow.com. I bought the website.

You know that I've already done, over the years have done a number of things in video training, but I started taking all of this information and reinforcing and supporting it that way. For the last 2 and a half years, we've been in the process of writing the book, getting the book published, making the book available, but at the same time, creating a website with videos. Now we have somewhere in excess of 50 training videos, along with learning activities associated with it, etc, that are under the Leadersoughttoknow.com website. The book is a good lead in and a good support, dependent upon which way people find Leaders Ought to Know site in the first place.

I could talk more about that specifically, but that is generally how we've approached this initiative, and quite frankly, it's worked very well for us. People have responded very favorably.

Susan Friedmann: Then everybody who buys into the Leaders Ought to Know program would get a copy of the book, or have you created a workbook that goes along with it? How have you married those materials?

Phil Van Hooser: I have a workbook that I use for on sight training. It is a book that spins off of, or out of, the Leaders Ought to Know book itself. The workbook represents about a 75-hour training program, so people don't have to use all of it, but they see what's available through the workbook. I tell them, this is all spin off material, spin off information that came out of my Leaders Ought to Know Ground Rules for Common Sense Leadership book. The question you asked though was, do people get a book just because they start using the Leaders Ought to Know online. The answer is no, we don't give it to them. We sell it to them if they want. Would I

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give them a book for the purpose of previewing the Leaders Ought to Know with some anticipation that they will buy at some level? Yeah, I would certainly do that because it goes back to my point about the book becomes the calling card, the business card.

Just because they want the online, doesn't mean that they want the printed book. If they do want the printed book, we can certainly make that available. You and I have talked in the past, and we both agree on this, I think. A lot of people see a book, a printed book, as a physical manifestation of the connection that I had, or you had with the author, him or herself. Online training is very different than holding a book in your hand, where you go, this guy wrote this book, or this lady wrote this book, and I like him, or I like her work, so therefore I embrace the book.

Some people just want to have something they can physically touch, that reminds them that there is a connection that has been made. I think that's pretty powerful. I happen to be one of those kinds of people by the way, therefore I can relate to that concept very well.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent, yes. The book, as you said, is this calling card, and it sounds as if you have taken that, and it's the nucleus for everything else you've built around it. Is that correct?

Phil Van Hooser: That's perfectly correct, and it is not only the nucleus, it's the entry way, if you will, because if they like the book, and the contents of the book, I can say, "Read the book and I'll call you in a week or two, or a month. Read the book, and then let's talk about the book." If I call them and I ask them a very simple question, I say, "All right Susan, how did you like the book?" You'll be able to read their response. "Well Phil, it was a good book. It was okay." That tells you something. If they say, "Phil it was excellent," or "Phil I love the stories," or "Phil this is exactly what our organization is going through right now."

Then I can simply say, "If you liked the book, you will love the programs that I do, either on site, or online. Let's start talking about how to use this book so that it can start to change the leadership behavior, and the leadership culture within your organization." That has worked exceptionally effective. Back to your comment, is it the nucleus? Absolutely it's the nucleus, because it's the cheapest and easiest way for someone to have a picture of who I am, what I do, and how I might be able to help their organization. That's really powerful.

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Susan Friedmann: Let's step back a bit. Many authors find that just marketing their book is a real challenge. Based on your experience, what advice would you share for a first time author that's sort of maybe struggling with how do I go about marketing this book?

Phil Van Hooser: The answer to that question is different depending upon whether it's a self published book, or if it's a book that is published by a publisher that they have to purchase copies at a preset price. If it's a self published book, and I think for most people, that's the best way to go initially. If your goal is to make money off the book, and I won't go through the mathematics here just now, but if the goal is specifically to make money off of your book, 9 times out of 10, you'll make more money from a self published book, than you will from a published book, if that's your singular goal.

If your singular goal is to get exposure, let's say national, or even international exposure, then it may be much wiser to go with a published book. Relative to your question, if I have a self published book, then there's a lot of things that I can do with it. As I said, give always are not that expensive. If you print, let's say 1,000 copies, print on demand now, you might be able to get them for \$2, to \$3, maybe \$4 a copy. That's not terribly expensive marketing.

We've used all kinds of ways to market the book itself. We've done postcard campaigns. We've used e-mail and social media campaigns. Since we have multiple books, as you referenced earlier, we have used discounted rates for multiple books. In other words, buy 1 book, it's regular priced, buy 2 or 3, and we'll give you a discounted price on all of them. It's amazing how many people will take you up on all of that. Therefore, we've ended up selling more books at a slightly discounted price, than we would have if we had just held to the regular price for one book.

A few things that I've done that frankly I've stopped doing. I don't employ the use of PR agents for the sole purpose of selling a book. I have done that in the past, and I know people have had success with that, but that's never really been as successful for me, and it was a great expense. I thought I could use the money that it would have cost me to do that, in other ways more effectively. For me that hasn't worked as effectively. Media interviews. I know a lot of people get on radio talk shows, and that has been very effective. I've done a number of them, but I haven't sold a tremendous amount of books as a result, or at least I can't track that I did.

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I know a lot of people do book signing tours, when the Leaders Ought to Know book came out, it was prominently featured for the month of November and December of the year it came out by Barnes and Noble, in their front window, and they had a special display, and so on, and so forth. I made a concerted effort to get to as many Barnes and Noble Stores during that 2 month period that I could. I actually visited, I think it was 60 some during the course of that 2 months. I'm not sure it sold one extra book. I'd go I and sign the books, and it was nice to meet the booksellers themselves, but I'm not sure it really did anything for the sale of the book itself.

I've tried a number of things. For me, adding it to the contract, in other words when I get a speaking or training engagement, I negotiate the contract, and then say, "Oh by the way, I would recommend you have a book, and it will only cost you this much more." That sold a lot of books for us that way. Selling books in the back of the room, now not everybody is a speaker or trainer, not everybody has that same platform that I have, but having books in the back of the room after you've done one of your keynotes, especially if you've referenced that book in the keynote. You can sell several books that way, and at the same time meet a lot of people that could also possibly allow you the opportunity to do other programs. There's a number of different ways to market the book. Some I've had more success with, some I've had less.

Susan Friedmann:

Great, I love all the examples that you've given, because there's really concrete examples that people can use. How about mistakes? What mistakes have you made? I know things that haven't worked for you that you mentioned, but have you made some real boo boos that you're like ahhh?

Phil Van Hooser:

I thought this was only a 30 minute interview. If you want to know about my boo boos, it will take hours to talk about that. There haven't been a lot of serious mistakes I would say, because I'm constantly monitoring, how did that work, and if it worked well, then we'll build on it. If it didn't work so well, then we'll back away from it. There's a couple of things that I would recommend that people at least be aware of, especially for the first book or 2. You get so excited, you've got your first book out, and appropriately excited. It's taken a lot of hard work. It might be a labor of love that you've wrestled with for years and years.

Then, in my case, as a speaker and a trainer, if you spend too much time talking specifically about the book, and how the book came about, and how the book changes people's lives, then frankly it becomes overkill

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and people think, oh, he's just trying to sell me something. If on the other hand, you mention the book, and say, "Here's one of the most critical lessons I've learned." You might reference the book, or maybe even read a short passage from the book, but without ever referencing. By the way, you can have yours in the back of the room for ... If you use it as a tool, as opposed to a product, I think that was a mistake I made early on, that I tried to sell too hard. As a result I drove people away, as instead of drawing them to me.

Another thing that I would simply say about books is, I don't think we write enough of them. Now, do they have to be hardback books in the traditional sense of the word? No. We can have electronic books. We can have white papers. In this day and time, especially with all the digital opportunities that are available to us, writing should be a responsibility that all of us wrap our arms around. If we've got a message, if we've got content, if we've got something we want to share with the world, we should be writing more often, not less often.

I've caught myself getting into this phrase, okay, I've got 6 months to write this book, and then I don't write anything else for let's say the next 18 months. I don't think that's the way it should be. I think we should be writing, creating on a regular ongoing basis. As a result of not having done that over the time, I would consider that to be one of the mistakes, or one of the faux pas that I've made. I don't know, there's probably some others, but those are the two that come quickly to mind relative to things that if I could change something today, those are two things that I would change.

Susan Friedmann: I agree with you. I've done the same. I've worked so hard at just selling books. I'm noticing more and more, and hearing this, that people don't really make money selling books. It's the other things, the speaking engagements, the coaching, and as you say, using it as an add on in your contracts. That's where you can make that extra. Just making money selling books, unless you're a celebrity, is very, very rare. What's the best way that listeners can find out more about your services?

Phil Van Hooser: Thank you. I'm pretty easy to connect with. I mentioned the Leaders Ought to Know, they can go to the Leaders Ought to Know website, www.leadersoughttoknow.com. They can e-mail me Phil@leadersoughttoknow, or if someone wanted to talk directly to us, that's always fun. I'd be happy to welcome a telephone call. Our office number is area code 270-365-1536. If anybody is interested, I'd love,

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and maybe has a question I could answer based on our conversation here today, I'd be happy to do that.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent, excellent. As we draw this to a close, because all good things come to an end unfortunately. If you could leave our leaders with a golden nugget of information, what would that be Phil?

Phil Van Hooser: When you write, write in your own voice, as if you're having a conversation with the person. When you begin to sell that product, if people can sense your personality, your heart, your passion, as if they were sitting across the table from you, if you can corner that, or if you can corral that in the form of your writing ... Here's just a quick writing tip, it's not about selling the book, but ultimately it helps sell the book. Before I ever finish a chapter, before I would declare a chapter completely finished and done, and then moving on to the next chapter, I literally go in a room by myself and read that chapter aloud, not to anyone, just to myself. If I can read that chapter in the same way, or in a very similar way that I would be talking to an individual, then I consider that chapter complete.

That has been wonderful for me, because I'll have people read my books and call me up and say, "Phil, I've heard you speak a number of times, or you and I have known each other for a number of years, it was like you were in the room with me. I could hear you talking." I believe that has sold a lot of books for me because of the conversational tone, and being able to capture that. That's a technique or tool that I would highly recommend if people don't use, at least experiment with it a little bit.

Susan Friedmann: That just talks to what a genuine person you are, and that comes over in everything you say, and as you say, you write as well. That's wonderful. I'm thrilled to have had you on the show. Thank you so much for sharing your expertise. Thank you all for taking precious time out of your day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it sparks some ideas that you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much marketing success.