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BOOK MARKETING: HOW TO MAKE REAL MONEY SELLING BOOKS Interview with Jess Todtfeld

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 media guru Jess Todtfeld, CSP. He's one of the top media training communication experts in the country. He's worked as a TV producer at ABC, NBC, and FOX, and has appeared on all those networks and more as an expert. He even set a Guinness Record for being interviewed the most times in 24 hours, 112 interviews on radio. He's the author of 4 books, including the soon to be released Media Training Crash Course. I'm proud to call Jess a National Speakers Association colleague, so Jess, a big welcome to the show and thanks for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Jess Todtfeld: Susan, it's a pleasure to finally be on your show. I'm excited to be here.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent, so let's get cracking. What I find is that so many authors say to me, "How can I get invited to be a guest on one of the major network shows such as Good Morning America?" How can they make that happen?

Jess Todtfeld: I'm going to pull the veil back, and I'm going to tell you right now in one word, ask. You need to ask them if you want to be on the show, so what that means is you need to either send them an email pitching them a story idea or pick up the phone. Go old school. People a lot of times don't pick up the phone these days, and then get a hold of somebody in the Booking Department, someone with either booker or producer in their title, and then ask them.

Say, "Hey, I have an idea for a story. Can I pitch you real fast?" Often, they'll say yes. Obviously, if you're sending through email, you're typing this, and you'll pitch them a story idea. One that sounds like a newspaper headline. This way, they can envision what it sounds like, so not a whole life story as a pitch where someone is going on and on, but an idea that is a sentence. How is that for an opener?

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Susan Friedmann: It's an excellent opener. Now, I'm going to ask you more to talk further about that whole story idea concept because what the author is thinking is their book that the network needs to be interested in their book. Talk to us about that.

Jess Todtfeld: Your book title is not usually your pitch headline or your hook. It could be. You may have a title that says it all that really excites people and tells everything, but often, something in the table of contents or something that connects with a problem that people have or an outcome that people want is going to be your pitch hook. If you have a book called "The 17-Hour Diet," the story hook may not be, "Hey, it's the 17-hour diet. Do you want to do that story?" Being on the receiving end of those pitches for years, I ... Actually, an old bio of mine. It's that I booked and produced over 6,000 segments, and you can only imagine in the 13 years that I was a producer, how many did not make it through.

If we were to see this 17-hour diet, it doesn't tell us what that book is about and there are a lot of diet books. Instead, if it says, "The 5 Easiest Things You Can Do To Lose 10 Pounds This Summer," so now I know that they are list of tips and it's something that's easy, and I know that it's tying into summer, so I would probably ask what those are or look in an email to see what those are, and then, it happens to be in the book called "The 17-Hour Diet." Now, I want to know more about what that is and what that means. That's a big important point, which is your book title is not necessarily and often not your media hook. You have to ... I have a good exercise actually for finding a media hook. Do you want to hear it?

Susan Friedmann: I would love to hear it, and I know our listeners would love it even more.

Jess Todtfeld: Yes, and I work with a lot of authors. I'm an author, and I know what it's like. Look, we got to get ourselves out there. A great little technique for finding a media hook is what I call the "TV Tease Technique." I'm a former TV guy, TV producer, and we would write these teases. You know the ones where they say, "Tonight at 11." I don't know why I have to say it in that voice, "Tonight at 11." "Tonight at 11, we'll talk to a woman who says blank," and the blank would be whatever it is that you say, so it could be, "What's in your medicine cabinet may kill you." That was one of the ones we laughed at, but always seems to show up again around [a week's time 00:04:46]. "Tonight at 11, we'll talk to a woman or a man who says blank."

Now, you write out the part that's blank, and then just that, we get rid of the beginning that I just said. That was just for the exercise, and then we have your hook, so it may be, "What's in your medicine cabinet may kill you." While that's become the internal media cliché of a tease, they tease,

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“Hey, there’s what’s coming up,” it’s funny. I booked ... Now that I’m saying it out loud, I remember booking a story. There was a company that had green products, and it was basically a play on that exact phrase. It was, “What’s under your sink is killing your family.”

It was basically something to that effect, and I remember I turned to my boss, my executive producer. I was a producer. There are lots of titles that I’m a producer in it, and I turned and said, “What do you think of this?” He said, “Yeah, yeah, but book it this week. Let’s get it on there.” You have to find a hook that grabs them.

Susan Friedmann: How about tying it into something that’s happening out there like you talked about the summer, summer coming up, or a holiday, maybe Easter, Christmas, any of the other holidays?

Jess Todtfeld: If we can tie it into something relevant, so it could be a hot topic, something that is really being talked about in the news. It could be something timely like you just said, summer or a holiday ... spring cleaning. You can add spring cleaning to almost any type of topic, a financial topic. “Spring cleaning for your finances,” and then all of a sudden, it’s the end of year, “It’s end of year, last chance to fix your finances.” Two days later, it’s “New Year’s resolution for your finances” or “Finance your New Year’s resolutions and how to make them stick all year.”

Yes, so we can tie it into something that’s happening in the news, something that’s timely, a hot topic or hot-button issues. Some never go away, and they’re hot-button issues. Also, local. Why not tie it into local? It’s funny. I just told somebody. They sent me an email this afternoon. They said that they went with the local angle where it said, “Local author does blank,” and it was something to the effect of how we were building up pitches right here on this interview, and they loved it because local likes local.

Susan Friedmann: How about getting into the local stations, the local CBS or the local ABC channels? Are the chances easier to go that route rather than going straight for national?

Jess Todtfeld: Yes, and we’re going to talk about both of them in our interview today, but starting with local, it is definitely easier. Now, I happen to live in New York, one of the big markets, and there is probably a little bit more competition, but most people are all competing for the top, top shows and the top outlets. We can expand what we’re saying today to be talking about print and radio as well. People go for the top, top outlets, but the local outlets, they need your help. Really, kind of a secret, they all need your help, local

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and national. They're always looking for stories.

Of course, nowadays, they call it "content." Everything is content. There's an endless need for content. They're looking for it, and the people on the receiving end, the media producers or bookers, their job is to find content and stories all day long, so local ... Most people are not calling or emailing local, so your chances of breaking in and getting through are pretty high, and not everybody knows that.

Susan Friedmann: Talk about a pitch. What are some of the dos and don'ts of writing a pitch or calling up and making that pitch?

Jess Todtfeld: This is good, so this is ... What I'm going to share comes from my little campaign that I did where I set that Guinness Record and got 112 different stations to interview me, which the way that came about was I was releasing a different book. That one was on public speaking and business presentations, and I had a friend who basically just challenged me. He said, "Well, you're the media guy. I hope you do this bigger than anybody else," so I laughed and said, "What does that mean?" He said, "How about Guinness Record big?"

Next thing I know, I'm sitting there and we're figuring out how can we do ... get more publicity than everybody, but that really led me to what I'm going to tell you now, which is the elements of a great pitch and a great ... say written or email pitch. The old way of doing it, the old idea was that you write up this press release and that you find this template that is long and boring and has big blocks of text. That's before people got 10,000 emails every day that you're trying to read and make your way through.

Then, people would look at the press release, and sit, and read it. Now, I remember being on the receiving end and just saying, "If I don't know what it is in 6 or 7 seconds, I have to move on to the next thing. It's just there's no in the day to do all of it." By the end of the day, there is usually a few hundred unopened emails. This was when I worked on the national level and at least 25 calls that were stuck in my voicemail, so 4 days later, there are hundred unanswered. There was a lot coming in. Probably less phone calls nowadays, but so the ... for the pitch.

Instead of a big, long, boring press release, here's what you do. You open an email, and you take that headline that we're talking about, that hook. We call it a "hook" because we're grabbing them. We're hooking them like fish, and what we do is we put that in the subject line. In fact, what I often do is I write, "Story:" and then the hook or, "Pitch:" and then the hook. This way, we've maximized our chances of getting it opened because they

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understand that it's a story or a pitch versus spam, or their boss writing to them, or a relative sending an internet joke. They have to figure out, "Is this relevant, and can it help me in my program?" That ends up working out very well if you put it in that subject line.

Then, next, what you want to do in the body is we want every one of these emails to be customized and feel customized, so it needs to say, "Hi," and then the person's first name. I've done this as a training for public relations companies, and experts, and authors. I sit people down, and I have them usually write this on the spot, so people who are tuning in, you can start scribbling down if they have the first draft of one of your pitches. It should say, "Hi, first name." If you end up using a mass email program, which is actually what I do for myself when I pitch myself.

I don't do publicity for other people, but I've been known to show people how to do it. I load up a few thousand contacts divided up by ... if they're print, or radio, or TV, and then I put the code in where it's a "Hi, first name" code. This way, it doesn't look like the same junk everybody is getting. If it doesn't have their first name in it, people will often hit "Delete" because they know it was just spam mailed out. It was just sent to everybody, so this doesn't look like it. In fact, the rest of the email should not look like a mass email. It shouldn't say, "Hi, editors," or, "Hi. I want to let all of you know." "What do you mean 'all of you?' You're sending it to me."

We really want it to look like an individual email, which means don't use the template from say constant contact with all of the images that go around the side and all that. Make it look like a one-to-one email from your personal email. What you want to do is you can write a few sentences, and then draw a line. Under that line, then you put a big headline with your pitch hook, so that it looks like a newspaper headline. Put it in a bigger font size. You can put a sub-headline, and you want to follow that with couple sentences on who you are, so it would say, "Jess Todtfeld is the author of ..." and maybe a couple of other lines about my bio and maybe even a link to a bigger version of my bio.

Under that ... This is key. Right underneath, you'd also have bullet points. I call it the "Point of You Section," and it may be titled, "What Jess will say?" so it'd be ... For all of you listening, it'd be what you would say in an interview because the question I always got asked when I was a producer was, "What will the guest say?" If we got that pitch that said, "The 5 easiest ways to lose 10 pounds this summer," then my executive producer would say, "Okay. Well, what are they? If they weren't great ones, we wouldn't do the story, so we needed to know."

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Often, we didn't even know what it was. Nobody put in there what the answers were, but that's key in a pitch meeting. It's great to look down and say, "You can do aerobic exercise while sitting at your desk, typing on your computer without buying a gadget." Whatever that would be, I don't know, but moving your legs and imagining you're doing the air bicycle or something, but that would be interesting. Maybe there'd be other ones, and sometimes, we would see techniques that weren't so great, and we wouldn't do it.

Those are the basic pieces that should be in there, but what people also need to do is put together a media list. Make sure that it's queued up and ready to go in one of those programs like a constant contact. You want to have it ready to go, so when something happens in the news and there's some big story where you say, "This is the perfect time for me," you can quickly get something out and get it in the hands of the media. A lot of times, people see something happening, and then they wait a few days, and the story is done.

Susan Friedmann: What about follow-up, Jess? I've had authors who say, "Well, I wrote to the Seattle Times, and they didn't get back to me."

Jess Todtfeld: It's funny. On the business side, I often say, "The fortune is in the follow-up." We have to follow up. We have to stay on people, and then eventually, they say, "Oh, okay. You know what? Yeah, maybe I'll do it," or they may say, "No, I'm not really sure, but go ahead. You can pitch me again," or something along the line, you have this ongoing relationship, and then eventually, you might move them to ... you hopefully move them to a yes.

Follow-up is key, so you send this thing out, and if you use ... if you send them email like I said, you use a program that sends out a whole bunch of them. It could be AWeber. I use something called "Your Mailing List Provider," which is really fantastic, and I'm not affiliated with them, but it's ... You can upload larger lists, and then just send them out and not really get roadblock, and they just put a tiny link in the bottom that says, "Unsubscribe," which I'm fine with unsubscribe if people unsubscribe because if they don't want it, they shouldn't be on the list.

Basically, what you want to do is you want to look at those statistics. See who opened it, and what you might find is you might have a Good Morning America or associated press who's been looking at it, and a lot of these systems will also tell you if they've been clicking around. If I tune in there and I see that Good Morning America has been opening it, if somebody from Good Morning America and that they've been clicking around, if I'm

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smart, I'm going to reach back to them either email or pick up the phone, and I know that there was an initial interest there. I want to get past the initial interest. I want to get them to be excited by it and say yes.

Susan Friedmann: What about the importance of media training, and why would an author need, let's say, a media trainer or a media coach?

Jess Todtfeld: The big thing that people do is they go out and they use this special technique that many people mastered called "Winging It." I don't teach this technique. It's built-in to people, and they go do it. It has shaky results, so it's not the best technique. Yeah. As a media trainer, what I tell people is, "The bigger problem is not going to be that you're going to go out and fall in your face, and freeze up, and have these huge issues that no one will ever book you again, and you can't live this town anymore."

That's not going to happen, but I'll tell you the big problem that will happen, which is people go out, they do an okay job, nothing spectacular, nobody really ... the audience was not really motivated to buy the book or to act in any way, and nothing really happened. You got into a media outlet, but it was okay. That, I think, is the bigger issue because it's more of a silent problem. Not so silent if you must sell books and do things to drive your business, and the book is usually an important marketing piece to get people to take other steps, and move forward, and do something else [if you're meeting 00:18:34] people for talking about nonfiction books.

On the media training side, a lot of people would think that I spend all day long talking about body language, and sit up straight, and comb your hair. While you think that that's what I'm talking about all day, I really spend a lot of time talking about how to authentically be in control of the narrative and drive people, the interviewers, where they really should be going to something that's a little bit more interesting and relevant, and make sure that you convert interviews, so this is taken from the sales world where we say, "The conversion means how did it turn into something real like business."

When I say this to people, the light bulb goes off, and they say, "Oh, yeah. Wait, that's what I want, not just to get the interview. I wanted to do it, so that there would be an outcome like sell more books and drive my business." That's the big return on investment for people to create some sort of outcome whether it's selling books or driving their brand, and then we can take these interviews, and we can have them last so much longer now by putting them on our website, in our email marketing and social media.

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I have interviews that ... I was on The Daily show with Jon Stewart in 2009. It was actually one of the interviews who came to me, and people still see that thing. It was 2009, and they still say, “Hey, I saw that. I was impressed, and I saw a few other things that you’re doing, and I want to talk to you and work with you.” It can live on much longer than you think, these media interviews.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent. Yeah, and to maximize them, do you have to get special permission in order to put something like that upon your website?

Jess Todtfeld: I have talked to lawyers about this, some friends of mine who are entertainment lawyers. When I was in television, we used to ... people would ask me this, and the unofficial answer we used to give to people is, “If you’re not saying something disparaging, they’re going to leave you alone, and they’re not going to give you any trouble.” If you’re making some sort of waves, then they’re going to probably say, “Why don’t you take that down?” but we’ve hit a point now that there’s so much content out there. I don’t even know how these outlets would ever stay on all of that. Really, they’re happy to get extra promotion.

The entertainment lawyers I talked to had said yes, and of course, you can talk to other lawyers and probably find ones that’d say no, but they had said yes to putting these interviews on your website and to putting the logos on your website to show “as seen in” or “as seen on.” A lot of people ... Sometimes, I’ll go and I’ll give a talk, and somebody might want to fight me on this one, and I usually go back to saying, “Look, if in doubt, leave it out.” If it makes you feel uncomfortable, you think you’re doing something wrong, then don’t use it. I know that I’ve had them on my website for years, and it’s been fine.

The other important piece is ... This comes up too and usually in the same conversation. They say, “But how do you know that those people actually did those interviews?” Then, I laugh, and I say, “I hope if somebody is putting the logo on their website that they actually did. That’s a whole other discussion. That’s just lying.” Whenever I see a video of a politician lying or one of these things, and then people say, “Oh, they were media trained,” I always say, “Well, first off, not well, and number 2, here’s a wild technique. Don’t lie.” There’s my technique for everybody who’s listening right now whether it’s putting logos in your website or doing interviews, don’t lie. It doesn’t usually work out.

Susan Friedmann: How about some other mistakes that you find that authors could make in this environment?

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Jess Todtfeld: The biggest mistake is going out there winging out. I'll tell you another one, going out there and delivering your first draft of the interview as if it were a document, your first draft in front of the interviewer and the world. As I'm saying that, everyone who's listening is processing what that means. It means that the first time you've done this interview is during the interview. Now, you might be saying, "Well, how would I do it more than once?" Okay, very simple. Practice. You can practice, even once, and the best way to practice, whether it's TV, print, radio, or internet media, is with a video recording device.

Thankfully, we all have one in our pockets these days. There's one built-in to our phones. We have a video camera built-in to our phones, or our digital cameras, or every other ... our computers. Every device seems to have one built-in. What I found is if you just do one practice interview, if you have someone who can ask you the basic questions, and then you can play it back ... By the way, I'm going to tell you every question right now that you will be asked in your interviews. You're ready for it, Susan?

Susan Friedmann: Absolutely, go for it.

Jess Todtfeld: Every question. Hold on to your hat. Who, what, when, where, why, and how? Woo, I made it through the whole list. That's it. That's what they will ask you, so in practicing, you can have somebody ... You can hand basically those questions to somebody else, or you can pretend someone was asking you, or you can say it under your breath, and then pretend that you're talking to somebody who is just off camera, and then you play it back. What you'll find is you'll notice that some answers that you give, fantastic. Some answers, they're okay. Some answers, not so great.

So then, you say yourself, "Okay, What would I fix?" What you should do is figure out what's working, do more of it, and figure out what you should improve, and make the adjustment, and even practicing once. People don't practice because they figured it will be too time-consuming, but the alternative is that you are stumbling around in front of people. Even if you practice one time, you're able to make adjustments. If you videotaped yourself and play it back, that's like a second draft, and you can look at it and think about where you would go. Then, when you show up and you do the interview, then you're not in a position to really do a great job.

Susan Friedmann: Talk to us about sound bites and the importance of them.

Jess Todtfeld: A lot of people hear the words "sound bites," which by the way, in print, they're called "quotes." They're basically those little bites that ... bite-size piece of sound that the person being interviewed says. In television, I

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remember they used to ... would hand me a videotape, and they would say, "Just go find a couple sound bites, and we'll use it during the story." We'd roll it into the show and say, "Oh, this is what so and so politician, or whoever it was, or person on the street, this is what they say."

Nobody told me what a sound bite was. We always said, "I know it when I hear it," and I'd go and the same with the video editor. They'd be sitting with me, and we would hear someone talking, talking, and they'd say, "Blah, blah, blah. Look, the bottom line is ..." and we'd say, "Oh, oh, wait. This is going to be good. Use this." When I left television, I said, "What? What were we looking for? What was it that we were trying to find, and why are sound bites even important? Is it just to make things snappy and snazzy?"

First, what I'll do is I'll tell you why it's important. In print, they are looking for quotes. They want to quote you saying something. They also need facts, so they may use some of your answers as facts, but they want quotes. That's what they do, and when they interview for an hour, they must take you out of context or they would've had to print the whole transcript. That's what they're looking for, and then in a slice-and-dice type of TV interview or radio interview where they just use a couple of answers, they're also looking for that sound bite or that quote.

The idea is, "What can you do to create an irresistible quote that they want and run with?" What I've done is I figured out of the techniques and elements. If you open today's newspaper, but you can online for those people who don't remember what a newspaper look and felt like, and you're basically looking for somebody being quoted, and I'm going to name off a few of the techniques, and what you'll do is you'll see that they're in there.

Instead of speaking in wishy-washy terms, instead of saying, "Well, this is something that this person might want to try." I'm imagining that's the answer I gave. It's a little too on the fence. When you speak in absolutes, and you say, "This is what we're doing. This is where it's going, and this is what it's going to be." Whoa, you stand by your words. They like that. If you look in today's newspaper, you will see people speaking in absolutes.

Another technique, bold, action-oriented words. Some mixed in. You'll see things like, "We were moved when we found this out. I was shocked or enraged." Those action-oriented words, which also ... You may have heard a motion in there. That's another one of the techniques, so if it has a motion in it, it could be if I said, "Look, we were saddened to learn the news," and maybe there is more to that answer, but whatever the news

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story is, that's something that they'll use. They'll use somebody giving an answer that has a motion in it.

We have bold action words. We have absolutes. We have some of these others. I'm going to give you a couple more. You may have heard in seventh grade English class to never, never ever use clichés, especially all of our writers who are on the line right now, but journalists can't stop themselves quoting somebody who mixes in a cliché. They can't stop themselves. It's like a cat with a cat toy.

Susan Friedmann: They're juicy.

Jess Todtfeld: They are juicy. It's true. They won't write it themselves, but they hear you say it, boom, you're in there. I just said one before. I said, "The bottom line is blank." If I'm talking, talking, giving my answers, and I say, "Look, Susan, the bottom line is you must practice and you must a video recording device." I actually gave you 2 for 1 there which was you had some absolutes and you had the cliché. It can sometimes be you're delivering a few of those. The cliché actually ... and it's not a cliché by itself. I wouldn't just say, "A penny saved is a penny earned," for no reason. That doesn't say anything. It would be like one of the ones that I've just used as an example leading into what I was already going to say.

Again, if you go to USA Today online and look at one of their cover stories, you will see some of these elements. A few other ones include humor, which is a double-edged sword. Only use it if you think it's going to enhance. Any of these techniques can end up hurting you if you accidentally use them and you shouldn't be. It could be a problem. Pop culture references, so if I said, "This person is the Mother Teresa of blank, of giving, or of the something world." We know what that means, which is also an analogy. I'm rattling off a number of them.

You can use these elements. Create specific answers around them. Put them in that pitch email, whether you're doing it yourself, or you have a publicist doing it for you and you hand it off to the publicist, and then that media person says, "Ooh, I like some of these answers. Maybe we should have them on. We should interview them," so it works out really well.

Susan Friedmann: Invaluable information. Thank you.

Jess Todtfeld: Thanks.

Susan Friedmann: How can our listeners get a hold of you?

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Jess Todtfeld: They can show up at my house. No, I'm teasing you. Don't do that. It will be very strange. How can people find me? You can go to successinmedia.com, success-I-N-media.com, and you can poke around. In fact, if you go there, a little box pops up, and it says something like, "You want free stuff or free media training techniques?" If you put your information in there, it actually does not go into a big spam file of, "We're going to spam you forever," surprisingly.

Instead, what we do is we send you what I call the "Media Training Toolkit" for free, and maybe you get 1 and 2 other emails just saying, "Hey, I hope you saw that," and then that's it. Unless you want even more information, then there's a way to get even more videos and some other things from me, but I always like to give away something free, and then not abuse that by spamming people forever [of a lot of people 00:31:08].

Susan Friedmann: Me too. I'm with you. If you could leave our listeners with a golden nugget of information, what would that be?

Jess Todtfeld: Oh, golden nugget. Golden nugget. Always leverage your media opportunities, so what I mean by that is I mentioned earlier The Daily Show, and I've had other interviews that I'm pretty proud of that are out there. Make sure that you get the maximum value out of it, so put it on your website. Not just on the media page of your website or an interview page, but mix it all around, so it becomes social proof that you're the real deal that the media is giving you their implied endorsement. Put them on different pages on your website. Mix them into proposals that you have.

If you have a kind of business like I do as a trainer, there are proposals that go out and other things. Put it in other marketing materials. Put it on social media and your email marketing if you do that, and certainly, for authors. I think authors need to be on board with all these types of marketing, but make sure it shows up everywhere, so that people will find it for years to come, and then you'll get the benefits from it. One last thing, a double-bonus golden nugget, the call to action. Always have a call to action, so people know what next step to take. You can say, "Go to this website and get my free tips," and then people will know that they should go there and go do that, and then hey, if they want to take more action, they can.