

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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BOOK MARKETING: Online Marketing for (Busy) Authors Interview with Fauzia Burke

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 online book marketing expert Fauzia Burke. Fauzia has spent over 20 years in book marketing and publicity, and is the founder and president of FSB associates, one of the first firms to specialize in digital branding and online publicity for books. She's a highly sought after digital marketing expert, consultant, and speaker, and has worked to promote books by Tim Burton, Allan Alder, Brian Tracey, Deepak Chopra, Sue Grafton, and over 2,000 others. It reads like a 'who's who,' her list of clients.

She's the author of the recently released book, "Online Marketing For Busy Authors." Her goal is to make online branding not only doable, but fun for any author who's writing or releasing a book.

Fauzia, welcome to the show, and thank you for being this week's guest expert.

Fauzia Burke: Oh my goodness Susan! Thank you so much for having me. I am looking forward to a great conversation with you today. Thank you.

Susan Friedmann: Let's get started and talk about the fact that ... online book marketing. We know we need to do it, as an author, but the thought of it sort of, I break out in a sweat, a cold sweat, it's overwhelming. What do you feel is the best way to get started with this?

Fauzia Burke: Well, it is overwhelming, you know, there is a lot of information and I think a lot of authors come to me and they go, "Oh my, you know my agent said I should be Tweeting," or, "my best friend said I should be making videos," and, "so and so said I need this on my website." There is just so much information and it's hard to really get through and figure out what's important. Some of the things I tell people is, I wrote my book for people, authors, who've been dragging their online marketing feet. I'm with you, I

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get it, I understand it's tough and I know there is a lot of information.

A few things that I would say is that, first of all, authors don't have to do everything. I think they feel like they do, but you don't have to do everything, you don't have to chase the next shiny object just because Periscope is the next trending thing on South by South West, doesn't mean it has to be part of your marketing plan.

Also authors if they start to look at the data, they will understand where to put their attention. I was at a conference recently, and one of the persons, [Lourista Handon 00:02:52], said "is this something I can do in less than 25 hours a week?" Yes, you can, but the important thing is you need to know what to do, what's being effective, what's not effective, because that will help prevent that burnout that we all feel. Then the most important aspect is really knowing your audience, because if you know your audience, then the marketing doesn't feel as overwhelming, because you're really connecting with like-minded people.

Susan Friedmann: You're touching on a subject, of course, that's near and dear to my heart. "Know thy reader." I believe that's a chapter in your book.

Fauzia Burke: Indeed ... Yes, it is, yes.

Susan Friedmann: Talk to us more about knowing your reader.

Fauzia Burke: I think one of the things that happen when people call me is that everybody has cool ideas about what to do, and how to promote things. One of the authors had called me one time, and said ... and I kid you not, this is what he said. He said, he wanted hot girls to hand out flyers of his book on Park Avenue, in New York City. That was his idea. I had to ask him, I said "well, who's the audience? Why are they on Park Avenue? Why are they hot girls doing this?" The audience just did not match that idea at all. It was just an idea that he had. If you don't match the audience with the ideas, then [they 00:04:15] really, a lot of them, or a lot of time and effort and money goes into the wrong action.

For example, that same exercise, if the author had said "I've written a graphic novel, and I'd like to hand out flyers by hot girls or hot boys, or neither, at Comic Con." That makes a lot of sense. That makes complete sense to me, because the Comic Con audience would be interested in a graphic novel, and that's your target audience. Then maybe if somebody's dressed up in a cool costume, people would be attracted to them, and getting a flyer from them. It's not online marketing, obviously, but it's just a very clear example of when an audience makes such a big difference in

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terms of your exercise.

The same thing happens when you're looking at online marketing. If you're working with, let's see ... Again, let's say, fantasy novelists, or you're working with a business book, and your audience is middle managers, all of your activities should be aimed at that audience. Then your work, and your effort, and your time, and your money, is going to be much more effective if you know your readers. I have a lot of people who call me and say, and I ask them, "who's the reader for this book," and they say "everyone." I tell them "there is no everyone.com, so we need to narrow that way down." I think that's why I put the chapter in the book. There's a worksheet in it to really make people think about their readers. A lot of times people just say, "oh, I think it's anyone who reads books, or anyone who has family," or things that are so big, and so generic that it would be hard to design a marketing program for it.

In my book, I really go over what we do know about our readers. What's the age group? What's the demographic? Is there geographic location that makes an impact? Education level, career platform. Are you writing a career book for someone who's starting their career, or someone who's at the height of their career, or someone who's transitioning into maybe working less, or ... where do they fall? I think when you discover that, your marketing becomes much more effective, and much more important and interesting.

- Susan Friedmann: I'm having to hold myself back, and just really laugh out loud at some of the things that you've said.
- Fauzia Burke: Oh, tell me ... Yes, I know. Don't [nag 00:06:32], these are funny stories, yes.
- Susan Friedmann: They're funny stories. I used to work in the trade show environment, and booth babes, you know the ...
- Fauzia Burke: Oh, that's what they're called? Okay ...
- Susan Friedmann: Yes, they call them booth babes. Here, you can call them book babes, if you want.
- Fauzia Burke: [inaudible 00:06:49] ... hot girls.
- Susan Friedmann: Then the idea that people's book is for everyone, and I love that "there's not everyone.com." I'm going to steal that, because ... Any event, no that's fabulous, that's so, so important.

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Let's turn our focus now to the branding. I noticed in your book you talk a lot about personal branding. How does that relate to, let's say, book branding? What's the, sort of, definition, or the fine line between the two?

Fauzia Burke:

I think that's a really good question, and I may be a little bit counter-intuitive in terms of what I'm going to say, but I honestly don't think they should be two different things, unless you are ... Actually, in no case, in my opinion, because the problem is, if you separate the two, you lose a little bit of authenticity. That really doesn't sustain well, and it's hard to keep up with that. If you have this second persona that is more the book platform, that is not uniquely you, then it just becomes a little generic, and I may not be as interested in it. I think we, as people, are interesting, and when we bring ourselves, our whole selves, personal life and professional life, together, it becomes much more of an interesting story than separating those two things out like we used to, and having a professional persona, and then a personal persona.

Of course you have to make sure that ... no drunk Tweeting, in either case, but you suddenly don't want to be sharing too much personal information. I think that there is a way that you can combine the two, because it makes us more interesting, and I think a lot more appealing that way. I would say I think it's a better way ... format to combine the two.

Susan Friedmann:

When you talk about the different platforms for social media, let's say, is there one that you prefer over the other, or again, does this go back to 'who is your target audience,' and based on that, you identify which platforms are the right ones to use?

Fauzia Burke:

Bingo. That's exactly right. That's exactly what I would tell authors. There's a lot of people on Instagram right now, it's very popular, it's very cool, I totally get it. It's not where my audience is going to be. I'm writing a book for people who are not as digitally savvy as someone who is on Instagram, so spending a lot of time on Instagram, unless I'm just enjoying it, and having fun with it, if I'm doing it for marketing, I'm missing the mark on the audience. Majority of my audience, for example, are probably going to be on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and that's really where I focus my attention. I'm on Pinterest just because it's fun. I'm on Instagram with, like 10 people following me, or something. Nothing major, but ... I have to focus my energy and attention on where my audience is going to be, and that's what what your readers should do as well ... listeners should do as well, is to find where it is that their readers hang out, and where do they get a response from them.

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Another thing that I've done, is there's a tool, a free tool, called Bitly.com. One time, I did a little test, where I was announcing the book, and I went to Bitly, got a free shortened URL. The advantage of the Bitly URL is that it actually tracks where people click on it, which is extremely powerful. What I did, was I grabbed that Bitly, and I used it in my newsletter, on my Facebook page, on my Twitter feed, on LinkedIn, maybe some other places too. I used it in different places to just see what the response rate would be, and I was able to tell very quickly that the number 1 response that I got from them, most people that clicked on it was from my newsletter, which is absolutely what I tell people. The mailing list is most important. The 2nd was actually my Facebook page, and then it went to Twitter, and then LinkedIn. From that, I was able to tell where I need to focus my energy and my attention, because the response rate allowed me to customize the, my campaign.

Susan Friedmann: This is a great segue-way into the idea of a website, and whether you should have a website that is just for the book.

Fauzia Burke: No! [Crosstalk 00:11:25]

Susan Friedmann: Thank you.

Fauzia Burke: I jumped in there, didn't even let you finish the question.

Susan Friedmann: Yes, that's okay. I know that feeling.

Fauzia Burke: Good.

No, please don't! I have authors who have done several websites, and several social media platforms, all targeted to one individual book. I just think that's a complete ... there's just no way that we can manage so many websites and manage so many social media outlets. It's really important to have everything under one name, under your umbrella's brand, which is your name.

I have a client of mine who actually had, he worked on Wall Street, so he'd written this book on memoir, on his sort of, like Wall Street ... it wasn't a memoir, sorry it was a business book about working on Wall Street. It was a finance book, but then he also wrote a memoir his father passing away, and he wrote a children's book for his daughter, just because he wanted to. He had all of these very different aspects, and so he had done different websites for them. He just, when he came to me, he had this array of this he could not manage anymore, and he was trying to figure out what the best solution was. He said, "well, these three are so different," and I said,

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"they may be different, but people who work on Wall Street also have parents, and also have children. People who have children also have jobs. It's okay, these are the three things that you are interested in." It's really important to make sure that you have everything under your name, and then every project goes in there. Every time you publish a new book, you build momentum rather than starting from scratch.

Susan Friedmann: I think that's wonderful, because I love the way that you strung that together, because you're absolutely right. We've sometimes forget how interweaving the personal and the professional, it's okay. I suppose that's what Facebook does for us as well.

Fauzia Burke: That's right, exactly. In fact, on Facebook, I tell people that, and maybe you'll get this because you worked in the trade show business, but I tell people that you have to kind of think that it's as if you're on a trade show floor. You're meeting people you've known for many, many years, and you're meeting new people, and you're showing baby pictures to friends who've seen you in, for many years, and telling people where your kids are, and how far along your book is. Then you're also telling people something new about yourself, because you're meeting them for the first time. That, I feel like, is a good persona when you're on social media. It's personal, but you're not also thinking you're hanging out with girlfriends, drinking wine at the end of Friday night or something. It's not quite that either. It is still a professional place. You still want to represent yourself in a professional way, but you can be personal within that.

Susan Friedmann: Would you advise having two pages, then? Having the personal, and having the more professional page on Facebook?

Fauzia Burke: Well, you definitely need, I think you need your personal page to do anything. But then, I would say every author needs an author page. Yes, the traffic on the author page is going to be less than your personal page, absolutely. It's going to be hard to build that number up, but you can do advertising on Facebook, author page. You can do certain things that are sociable. There's certain benefits to having readers find you on that author page, and you can interact with them there. I think you do need to control some of that personal privacy in terms of complete strangers finding you, and looking at things that may be too personal for that relationship.

Susan Friedmann: You mentioned Facebook advertising. Can you touch a little bit on that, because I've had authors who've talked to me about that, and asked my opinion. I'd love to hear yours.

Fauzia Burke: Yeah, absolutely.

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Here's what I've found to be really useful. I know people who've spent a lot of money on Facebook advertising, and if you have that money, I guess it's fine, but I would say the first thing you want to do is start small. Test: if things are working, you can double down. If it's not working, just ditch it. Start small, don't have to make ... You don't have to bank the bank on it, on the first try.

Here are the things that have worked for my clients. I do think that paying to get your likes up to at least 1,000 is worthwhile, because what happens is once you get to 1,000 likes on your Facebook page, then doing advertising off friends of friends becomes a lot more effective. If you only have, let's say 200 people on your Facebook page, on your author page. If you do any kind of advertising where you're doing, you're targeting friends of friends, there's just, the pool is just very small. Getting to 1,000 ... it doesn't have to be 10,000. I have noticed that people who have tremendous following have a better engagement level. Getting to 1,000 people is a good first step, so I would say spending money to get the likes to that is good. You don't have to continuously spend money and try to get the number very, very high, because in my experience, people with really huge numbers, I haven't seen that lead to tremendous book sales, or anything like that, so I wouldn't spend a lot of money on that.

The second way that I used Facebook advertising to good use doing geo-targeted ads. If a client of mine is doing a public book event, or a, there's going to be a book signing, or something like that, where it's a public event, and anybody can join, I do a geo-targeted ad, which means that I do an ad that's geographically targeted for that location. I do friends of friends, so people who are interested in the topic, and see that their friends are interested in this author, may be more inclined to come to an event. We have seen an increase in people coming to events because we have done these geo-targeted ads.

Susan Friedmann: Fantastic.

Fauzia Burke: Those are two very small. They don't have to take a lot of money, or, honestly, technique. It's not complicated to do these two things, but they definitely make a difference.

Susan Friedmann: Then would the ad take people to buy page, or is there something in between?

Fauzia Burke: I think there, you can do that. I haven't found that to be as effective to get to the buy page. The like page is a lower threshold in terms of

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commitment. I think people can get to the buy page at, from your web, from your page. But the geo-targeted ad actually takes them to the event page, or the event listing on Facebook.

Susan Friedmann: Okay, okay.

You talk about an online marketing plan in your book. You refer to that. Talk to us more about actually putting one of those plans together.

Fauzia Burke: I think what happens in my book, it's organized in 3 phases.

The 1st one is to get organized. One of the steps you mentioned was in it, which is 'Know Thy Reader.' That's really about getting organized in terms of what it is that you want to do, how do you want to do it, how much time you're going to have, who's going to be looking at your book, who's the target audience?

Then the 2nd phase is turning that, all that thinking into an action plan. We go over, I have checklists, and worksheets, and things like that, to just go over what the priorities list is. I think when authors are looking at how much work they have to do, it's important for someone to come out and say, "okay, but here's the basics."

You need a very good professional website. Not an expensive website, but a professional website. You definitely need to have some social media engagement, and you need to have a mailing list. Those are the things that are the most important to set up. I think when you're looking at a marketing plan, I have this formula that I use with my clients. It's called 'design, plus engagement, plus visibility, equals success.'

Design part is actually designing your website, designing your social media assets, making sure that you represent yourself as professionally as possible from a design point of view.

Then engagement is really building on interacting with people on social media, writing blogs, doing ... if you love doing videos, that's great. Any kind of interaction where you're really showing people who you are, what you do, what your expertise is.

Then visibility is actually creating publicity, and distribution, and advertising on top of that. It's really important to have a plan that looks at 3 aspects of it, and builds them in that fashion.

Susan Friedmann: That's a great little formula.

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Fauzia Burke: I know it's great.

Susan Friedmann: Very easy to follow, as is the whole book.

Fauzia Burke: It makes you think about it. It makes people think about "oh, okay, I'm on phase 1, or [good 00:20:35]," say ... It just makes you think about that, and so I think having a plan is really important, and having a plan you can execute.

I think one of the things I said in my book is that everybody wants to be a best-selling author, but that's more a wish, it's not a goal, because if we knew how to do that, we would all do it. Each one of us would do it, over and over again, but it doesn't ... there isn't a formula that you can follow, and say, "at the end of this formula you're going to be a best-selling author." It's really important that you look at all of these, all of the plan as a more long-term engagement, and long-term investment in your branding and your career.

Susan Friedmann: I think there's a lot of falseness about this best-selling author. It's like, what does it mean, and what's going to do for you?

Fauzia Burke: Yeah, well, also, I think obviously a New York Times best-selling book means forever you're going to be a New York Times best-selling book, but what I meant was people who were trying to game the system, and trying to be 1 on Amazon for an hour, and that kind of stuff. That doesn't really translate to long-term sale success, in my opinion.

Susan Friedmann: Yeah.

Let's talk about mistakes that you've seen authors make. You've worked with enough of them, so you probably could write a book about the mistakes.

Fauzia Burke: That'll be the next one, I guess.

Susan Friedmann: Yeah. We'll do that in collaboration.

Fauzia Burke: Yes.

So the first thing I would say, and I see this a lot, is an author having unprofessional and outdated website. I'm sure you've seen that, too, Susan. I think that it just represents you poorly. It's really important. People do judge a book by its cover. If you are sitting on a website that just looks

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unprofessional, people will assume that your writing is unprofessional, and that your book is unprofessional. It's really is the core of your online strategy is to make sure that you have a professional website that represents you in the best way possible. I think that's number 1, and I see it over and over again. Professionally published authors with big, big publishers come to me, a month before publication date, with the most ridiculous websites. I don't know how they got there, but that's something that I wish everybody knew that.

The other thing is just simply ignoring social media. I still get tons of questions, who tell people ... People who say "well, I just don't want to do it." I used to try to talk them into it, but I've learned my lesson, and I just say "okay," because there are a billion and a half people on Facebook. They're not missing you if you're not participating. You're missing out on interacting with them. I try not to talk to people, but it's definitely a mistake, because it's the way people are talking, it's the way people are communicating, and just opting out of it is just not a smart strategy, for sure. It takes a weekend to learn these tools. It's not difficult, you can take an online course, you can ask someone to help you, because it can feel intimidating, but once you learn it, I think you will enjoy it very much. Just ignoring it is not a good strategy.

Obviously, this is something you and I have talked about, but certainly not identifying their audience properly, and not knowing what to post, how to post, what they're aiming for. If we don't have a target, then we don't really know where our ... the road that's leading to that target. It's really important to make sure that you know your audience, and can target them specifically.

I would say those are the 3, probably the most detrimental mistakes. Other mistakes people make, and I think you can certainly recover from it, but these are the things that I think can really be detrimental.

Susan Friedmann: I love the fact that you say that the billion and a half people are not missing you, but you're missing them. That's a great quote!

Fauzia Burke: Yeah, it's kind of hard to say that to people, but it's absolutely true. It's sort of like, "okay, if you don't want to do it, I understand," but, that's right.

Susan Friedmann: Yeah, and you're right. It's no good convincing people. Either they're willing and open to doing it, or they're not. It's a mindset.

Fauzia Burke: Yeah, exactly. I know, and as I said, earlier on I used to try to explain the benefits, and try to talk them into it, but I feel like people just get more

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defensive when I do that. They are where they are, they know, they've read as much as I have about how important it is. If they still haven't been convinced, then they're not coming to me asking for advice, they're coming declaring their intentions, so I just accept it.

I will say there's one other mistake that I do make, people make, that I would like to talk about. I was just at a conference called Publishing University, by Independent Book Publishing Association. One of the things that people said was they had gotten advice that they should not start promoting their book until a month before it comes out. I would say that's a pretty big mistake. It's really important to have a longer runway when you're planning your launch of your book, and planning the publicity, and marketing and all of those kinds of things. A month before is just not enough. A month before, you just be finalizing all the plans, and making sure that everything is on track. You can't leave things to the last minute, because what happens is that you then have no time to make mistakes, and we all make mistakes, so we need to have some time that we can recover from mistakes.

The other thing is, a month before, you're expecting that everybody, media, consumers, readers, are sitting around waiting for that announcement from you. They're busy, they've got other things going on, so you're not going to get everybody's attention right away. Really, making sure that you're planning way in advance, in fact there may be things that should be doing a year in advance, and onward. That's definitely something that I hear, and it sounds shocking to me that they're getting that advice from someone. Not starting enough is definitely a mistake as well.

Susan Friedmann: Saying that, what would you feel is an optimum time? A year sounds like such a long time, but [Crosstalk 00:27:01]

Fauzia Burke: It does seem like a long time, but remember this is about building your brand, and it takes time. I've seen between 18 months to 2 years, where social media engagements starts to really pay off. You want to give yourself enough time. You don't have to launch your book a year in advance, but you certainly want to make sure your website is up and running, and that you're starting to build your mailing list, and your starting to get your social media in, on track, and you starting to figure out what kind of engagement makes a difference. Where people respond, what time people respond, maybe start going to conferences, and start talking to people so you can start to build that mailing list and that rapport with people, so when your book does come out, you have all of that in place.

The other thing I would say that's really important to do is to be as

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generous as possible long before you need people, to ask them for a favor. You can't come out of thin air, and ask people to start pre-ordering your book, and talking about your website, and talking about your book. None of that is going to happen out of thin air. If you spend a year being generous to other people, then by the time you need help, they will be much more inclined to help you because you already got a deposit in the favor bank, as it were. I would say that's really important. But then, if there is a book launch 6 months before, you should have a plan of what you want to do, how you want to do, how do you want to build on the big launch. What can you do before hand, how often do you want to blog, how many times will you interact on social media? All of that should be planned out at least 6 months in advance.

Susan Friedmann: How can people get ahold of you? I know they're going to want to, so ...

Fauzia Burke: Oh, I hope so. If I've done my job right, they should be able to search my name, and come across me in many different places, but they can start with my website, which is FauziaBurke.com. They can find information about my company, which is FSBAssociates.com, and about my new book, which is Online Marketing for Busy Authors.

Susan Friedmann: Let's end off with a golden nugget of information, if that's what ... What would you leave our listeners with?

Fauzia Burke: I would say that when people are thinking about online marketing, one of the things they have to really focus on is consistency. A lot of people think that they can start promoting their book a month before, and show up out of thin air, and then disappear after a month after, and then show up again at the next book, as if nothing happened. That really, it does not work anymore. You really need to have a more consistent engagement, consistent plan. You need to be able to send your newsletter when you don't have something to sell. It can't always be "I'm here, I showed up because I have a sales pitch to make, and then when I'm done with that, I'm leaving." I would say people should just think about it on a more long-term basis, and not only think about selling, but really developing relationships with people.

Susan Friedmann: Well, this has been priceless. Thank you so much for taking the time.

Thank you, listeners, for taking your precious time out of the day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it sparks some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.

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