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BOOK MARKETING: HOW TO KEEP YOUR TITLE ALIVE FOR YEARS Interview with Susan RoAne

Susan Friedmann: Welcome to "Bookmarking 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 networking and conversation expert, Susan RoAne. Because of her groundbreaking bestseller, "How To Work A Room," Susan is considered the undisputed and original networking and conversation expert. She's written 8 books and has sold over a million copies worldwide, and as a result, is often quoted in such diverse venues as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Chicago Tribune, Washington Post, Cosmopolitan, CNN.com, and Forbes.com.

Susan RoAne leads a double life as a best selling author, and a highly sought after keynote speaker, known as the "Mingling Maven." She's a really good friend, and National Speaker Association colleague, so Susan, a huge welcome to the show, and thank you for being this weeks guest expert and mentor.

Susan RoAne: I love listening to the introduction. I could listen to you all day, but I'm delighted to be here, because anything I can do to help other authors is exactly what I want to be doing.

Susan Friedmann: Susan, your groundbreaking bestseller, "How To Work A Room," is still very much alive and well, after almost ... What is it? 25 years? What's your secret for keeping this title healthy?

Susan RoAne: I think the first secret is people really want to know how to do this, but the second secret is, I didn't have children. This is my first born. I treated this book with all my energy that I possibly could to support it. I did everything I was asked, and I did more. For me, it's focusing on the book as part of the business. A lot of people think like, "Just write a book." I saw it as I wrote a book and that's part of my business so what does a business plan for a book like, and what do I need to be doing? Honestly, that even meant getting up in the middle of the night and doing radio interviews, because New York is on a different timeline, or the British, BBC, is on a different time zone, so I always said, for the most part, "Yes," so it was really doing everything I could. And you know what, Susan, this is what I share with all

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of our listeners.

It's following up on every possible lead, so it's not very different than the networking that we do in our daily lives and business. But number 1 is let everyone you know, know you have a book. This book first came out in 1988. Oh, my goodness, I've got a geriatric book! What I did was I put together a list of my high school friends, my overnight camp friends, my college friends, the sorority sisters, the neighbors, current colleagues, and I sent everyone a letter saying, "I really need your help. Would you go into a local bookstore? Would you ask for my book? Would you start that word of mouth or awareness?" You know, I had friends that actually did that. Whether they were in Borders, Barnes & Noble, a local Book Passage, or Posman's.

They actually went into bookstores. I said, "I needed your help," so the thing I want to underscore is that the people who love and adore you, and know you, they could even be your cousin's cousin from the other side of the family, those people want to help. So be sure to let them know not only that you need their help, but also what they can do to help that really doesn't encumber and burden them.

Susan Friedmann: I really like that, because I think it seems so obvious, it's a group of people who you've got right there at your fingertips, and they want to help. At least it'll help kick start your book sales, hopefully, or at least help with the book promotion.

Susan RoAne: You know, here's another thing. What I see a lot of people do now is, "Buy my book on this day and I'll give you \$2000 worth of free consulting in 15 minutes." Well, I'm from Chicago, there's a little bit of skepticism about that to me, but this way you're not saying to people, "Buy my book, buy 10 copies for friends." The first thing you're doing is saying, "I need your help to just get the word out." I think there's something about that that doesn't burden people, and people will talk, and help spread the word if you ask them, and don't ask so much of them that you put them on the spot.

That was what one of my high school friends did. I asked her, and she came back and said, "I've just been to five bookstores."

I said, "You're kidding?" She said, "Well, you asked me to." We're so lucky now than back 28 years ago as we can combine asking people through social media, our email lists, and our friends and family. We can get to people and inform them so much easier than it used to be.

I would say that if you haven't embraced social media, this would be a really good time to start. Some people just use regular email. I use

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MailChimp, and we send out newsletters, but I also found sometimes just sending an email straight from you rather than from a MailChimp, or a Constant Contact, or an Aweber, just says, "Oh, I really need your help. Please excuse me for a group email, but I'm so excited. I just wanted to share this with you." That works for me. It's how I've gotten many responses.

Susan Friedmann: I think that's very powerful. You mentioned radio interviews, and that's something we haven't addressed yet on any podcast. I'd love you to talk more about being a guest expert on a radio show. How do you go about it? What are some of the behind-the-scenes insider secrets that we need to know?

Susan RoAne: Well, first of all, in all fairness, I don't want to say that I wrote my book, and radio shows were just started to call me. The truth is there was a lot of press on it, because it was the first of its kind. You have to understand, the producers at radio shows are generally shy people, and they went, "Oh, my God. I really need this book." Some did contact me, but truthfully I did allocate a budget, and hired an actual book publicity firm to help me. Some firms do the whole shebang, they'll do print, they'll do radio. The particular firm I used came recommended to me by an editor, someone that I knew through the publishing world. They do a radio tour, they only book radio shows that are known with audiences who buy books. That's really significant. You can get on X amount of radio shows, but if their listening audience are not the kind of people who buy books, what's the point?

Susan Friedmann: You make a very important point here, and that is putting money aside for publicity, or for promotion. Talk more about that.

Susan RoAne: You mean the trip I didn't take down the Danube? I've always wanted to go to Prague. I haven't yet been to Prague, but I'm hoping...

Susan Friedmann: It's a beautiful city. You should go there.

Susan RoAne: I know. I really want to go. I allocate my life a little differently. These are my babies. What would you do if you're a parent, or you have something you want to allocate funds for? When you're writing your book, you allocate money to hire a private editor that helps send the book to charm school. But by the same token, you really do want to look around and find a real book publicity company. I'm going to say something that some people who run these businesses won't like. Please be very dubious about these online groups that say, "We have this famous author and if you pay us \$8000 we can guarantee you..." don't believe that. Do your due diligence.

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I just counseled someone who is really a well-known writer. She paid a lot of money to someone because someone who was famous was linked to it. But they didn't produce. We got her out of that one. You want to go with a book publicity specialist and allocate the funds accordingly. If you're going to write a book, you allocate not just the money, but also time, energy, psychic energy, and I'd like to say a little part of your intestinal tract, which means "fortitude." I just think it's my intestines, because it feels like that. You do have to put that much into the book. Just because the book is out doesn't mean one person is going to buy it. It is your baby, and by the way, even though all my books were published by New York publishers, I never thought it was their job.

I'd like to liken that to something else. For years, when I've flown to do my speaking business, I never thought it was United and American, Alaska's and Delta's job to feed me, mostly because I didn't like their food. Hey, I don't even like my own food, but I always brought my own meal. Why would I leave to the airline, the care and feeding of Susan RoAne? By the same token, why would we think that just because a book is out, whether you put it on Amazon, just remember, you have to be diligent and vigilant. Wait a second, vigilant. Oh, I thought that rhymed. I just made it rhyme by accident.

Susan Friedmann: It was cute.

Susan RoAne: It was cute, I know. It's like I love those little things, even though I just killed the English language, but you do have to be diligent. You have to put money away, because if your goal is to have your book in people's hands, there has to be an investment, just as if you started a business, and your book is your business. That's maybe the other part. We need to understand that writing the book is one thing. There's such joy when you have it in your hands, oh my goodness. I just carried mine in the arms like it was a baby, but the other part is the care and feeding, and that's going to cost some money.

Susan Friedmann: I couldn't agree with you more. You're preaching to the converted with me, as you know. Mistakes. I'm sure in the 25+ years of keeping this baby alive, and of course, writing other books, what are some of the mistakes that you've made that our listeners can learn from?

Susan RoAne: The mistakes that I've made? It was sometimes investing in the wrong thing for my book. There is someone that called me and said, "If you pay us \$600, you're going to have a keyword from your book," and this was when I wrote, "How To Create Your Own Luck," which by the way wasn't my concept. My concept was, and the title was, "You Never Know How To Turn

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Serendipity To Success," and I might add, the New York publisher changed the title, much to my chagrin. The wonderful thing is, you have your book with your title, and it's a title you love, so you have all the passion for it. You don't have to hold your nose, and promote.

That's a wonderful thing, but a guy used a line on me. I didn't think it was a line at the time, and he got me to cough up money and put something on my credit card, and as soon as that year was up, I was on the phone saying, "Don't. I'm out. Don't charge my credit card," but I made that mistake. I put some money into promoting a book by keywords with someone who was in one of those businesses that I was just saying to avoid.

Susan Friedmann: I've done that one too many times, as well. I know that one very well.

Susan RoAne: Oh, actually, I made another mistake. I made a thousand mistakes, but fortunately, I can't remember them all. But one of the mistakes I made is I hired someone to edit one of the books, because you need another pair of eyes. I was going to be on the road speaking, and I wrote something in the introduction that said, "Well, if you need to see the buzzwords in business, let's get this over with. Here are the seven. You're not going to see them anywhere else in the book." Well, that's my sense of humor, and that's what I thought, and the person who I hired said, "Susan, you haven't earned the right this close to the beginning of the book to use your little Chicago blah, blah, blah, sense of humor," and she took it out.

You know what? I made the mistake. I'm the one reading three newspapers a day, I know that there were people like me that thought, "Really? This is a buzzword if I say it one more time, I am going to..." It's like, you don't need to have bulimia. That stuff makes you gag. I listened to her when my gut level and my research level told me she was wrong. Literally, the book was published and two months later, the Wall Street Journal front cover did the exact same article with almost the exact same words that I had identified as the overused buzzwords. Luckily, the trade issue, we put that back in, but I'd like to say, I didn't go with my gut, and I allowed someone to overrule me who really didn't know what I knew.

Susan Friedmann: It's amazing, isn't it? We do that. They just have to be so convincing, and you're like, "Yes, okay," and then you start doubting yourself. Let's talk about how the book has helped you as a keynote speaker. Talk to us about that.

Susan RoAne: How about this? This book and actually, I wrote several more, which also made bestseller lists, "Secrets of Savvy Networking" did, but here's the other thing. Let me just get to something first. I had the agent calling me

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when the book ... I had to switch agents, I'm the Zsa Zsa Gábor of authors, but I had a new agent call me and say, "Okay, well, your book's out now. What are you writing next?" It's like, "What?" See, the difference is I really believed you have to support a book for X amount of time. Get it through the toddler years. Having a book every year means you just crank them out, and don't promote them, and don't give them a life.

I didn't feel that way. I'm the every four year person, because that's what I did. And, if I could say anything to the audience as a mentor, is spend a couple of years supporting your book. What's wonderful now with having a self published book, an online presence, you can re-launch your book literally every other year if you want. There are so many advantages you have, but don't just go to the next book. Really help build the current one that you have. But back to the speaking, "How To Work A Room," I was already a speaker. May I tell you one story that happened to me? I did a talk at the Commonwealth Club, which is our issues forum here in San Francisco, they asked me to speak. Well, I was in the Chronicle, so then they called and asked me to speak to their career and business section.

There were two guys there. Now, I wouldn't, but then I thought of them as old. Now, I would think of them as young, but they were sitting there, and they reminded me of those two Muppets in the balcony, I think they were called Statler and Waldorf, after the two hotels, and they're old grumpy men. One of them said to me, this is before the talk. "We just have to ask you a question." I'm holding the book under my left arm like it's a baby, and I said, "Oh, yes. Pray tell. What do you want to ask me?" They said, "How did you turn a 200-page book into a 45-minute talk?" They were really challenging me. Because I had what is the blessing from my grandfather, a sense of humor, the answer came to me like in a burning bush, I didn't have to wait an hour.

I thought, "How do you handle these two guys that are," ... Well, let's not use words to call them names other than grumpy old jerko men. I looked at them and smiled, and laughed, which was what my grandfather would do when he was about to come up with a punch line. He always had to let us know it was funny, because he didn't think we knew that it was. I just said to them, "You think that's tough? I took a 45-minute talk and turned it into a 200-xspage book."

Susan Friedmann: I love it.

Susan RoAne: You have to handle some things with humor, because this goes back to your network. There might be people in your life, in your network, in your circle that might be like those two grumpy old men. Be sure to have a

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couple of answers just prepared. "Oh, why would you say such a thing?" "Funny you should say such a thing." That you would just respond. Don't get into anything with people who aren't supportive of you, your book, getting the word out, or making sales. We need to move away from them. This book was a talk first, and then thanks to Judith Briles, who I call the godmother of "How To Work A Room," who said, "Suse, you could really write a book. 'How To Work A Room' should" ... She said, "You could really write," because I was writing for the San Francisco Examiner Career Series.

I held up my column in front of 30 colleagues that were in her seminar on how to write a book, and she said, "'How To Work A Room' should be a book." I honestly never thought that until I heard Judith say this. Somehow, when you have people say to you, "It should be a book," then say to them, "Well, how do you see getting the word out? Can you help me?" I mean, go back to the people that supported you, but in terms of what this book and really the other ones did, they expanded my speaking career beyond my wildest dreams.

Susan Friedmann: Now, have you been able to take other books and turn them into speaking engagements? Or, have speaking engagements created the other books for you? Which way around?

Susan RoAne: Oh, no, no, no. Actually, I was very lucky. I had an editor at Warner, whether you hire your own editor, or it's with a publisher, we always think that we need people who communicate the way we do. I actually prefer that, but it was a person who communicated the opposite of the way I do, which was very hard on me. I would have stomachaches, and be so nervous to call her. I was apoplectic, but I didn't understand that we just had different communication styles, but she saw me as an author. She's the one that said, "Write a book on networking." I said, "Well, you know, there's so many books," and you know what she said to me? "Really, go to your bookstore and examine the bookshelves."

Well, that was interesting. This goes to a point I would make. I went to my local bookstore who knew me, and he said, "Can I help you?" He was the assistant manager. I said, "Oh, my editor said that I have to look for books on networking, and I don't want to write one." This is what the assistant editor at my local bookstore said to me. "Susan, if this is Warner Books, and they tell you to do it, you do it. They know what they're doing." Sometimes, who would have thought that an assistant manager at a bookstore was going to say something that made me rethink my narrow mindedness. Sometimes good advice comes from places we don't know, but I want to go back and reiterate something.

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You have a book, all of our listeners have a book, and I know this is going to sound like heracy, but please don't buy all your books on Amazon. You live in a community. There are community bookstores. They're local bookstores. Even if it's a chain, they have a local brick and mortar with local people who you might know or even went to school with. Have a relationship with your local bookstore. Buy some books there. Come in and talk to the sales people. They would be happy to have an event with a local author if you would invite your local friends, relatives, colleagues, and put seats in the chairs of people that might buy the book through the bookstore.

Granted, you'll have to split the profits but developing that relationship is important. But here's the other part. The cache of having a book event at a local bookstore means that you can get listed in a calendar, you might even send that information to your local paper. They might even come out, and send a reporter. There's so many possibilities. Don't do it as a book signing. The RoAne way is make it a book party, an event.

Susan Friedmann: Tell me what you see as the difference.

Susan RoAne: Oh, yeah, I can tell you the difference. One time I had a book signing at a bookstore in San Francisco. It was a Crown bookstore, and the only person who showed up was Patricia Fripp, my good friend. It was like, we could have had this, and a cup of coffee anywhere else. Book signings are awful, because people who are coming in to buy other books will look at you like, "I'm afraid to go near her. What if she makes me buy her book?" When you turn it into a book event, make sure there's seating, give a little talk, introduce ... If your parents are there, introduce people who you might have quoted in the book, tell some stories from the book. If you make that an event, and a few balloons would be nice, and have some food.

I always went to Trader Joe's, and picked up \$25 worth of gluten laden food. I always said, "If you're allergic to gluten, you're out of it." But seriously, I always had cheese, and bottles of water for people. Just because I wanted to make it celebratory, but the other thing is, I wrote "How To Work A Room," I wanted people to nosh and nibble before and feel comfortable to stay around and maybe have a little brownie, or a little something, piece of cheese, because food helps people talk to each other. Make that book event ... Is \$25 or \$30 that you pay, a lot of money? In the scheme of things, no, but if you set the tone for something that people enjoy, they will help get the word out about your book.

Susan Friedmann: That's interesting because it's just a little different from calling it a book launch or a book signing. It's that party, as you said, and you make a big

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deal of it.

Susan RoAne: Now, you have to know you're talking to a person who didn't have children, so when "How To Work A Room" turned 10, I thought, "Oh, my goodness. It's a milestone." I gave it a birthday party. My book had a birthday party that had embossed napkins. I invited friends, and there was a little bit of noshing, and it was at a local restaurant here in Marin, and my best friend was in town, so it was perfect timing. Then, I said to my book, yes, I know, I talk to my book. It's a very sad situation, but I said to my book, "You know what book? If you, 'How To Work A Room,' are still earning me money when you're 13, you're having a Book Mitzvah." I mean, I don't have kids. What a wonderful thing for me to share with my friends?

I literally had friends come in from Chicago, San Antonio, Momsie came in from LA, and I had a Book Mitzvah. The funniest thing is, I had chopped liver flown in from New York. Of course I would. Champagne, a candle lighting ceremony. One of my friends who was a singer wrote a version of "Networker, Networker, Make Me a Match."

Susan Friedmann: I love it.

Susan RoAne: You know what? It was also a wonderful way to ... And this goes to something that's what I'm about, which is to have the people in your life close by you, celebrating with you, because if their kid had a birthday, and if they had a wedding, wouldn't you be on a plane going to it? Of course you would. Or, "Oh, please. My son or daughter is in a play." You would go. This is a way, because I didn't have kids, of bringing my worlds together. People wanted to meet Momsie. People wanted to see Ruthie again. They wanted to, and Leslie Rossman, who has been my book publicity person, she and her husband came. It's, to me, the way that you celebrate a book. It's a different kind of a launch. I have never felt personally comfortable with what I see online, but I know I'll do that, and I have done it, but I think you don't want to avoid the face to face people, and not do that and just do the online, because you're missing all those people that live around you and love and adore you, who'd want to help you.

Susan Friedmann: Let's turn our focus to mistakes you've seen other authors make. I know you've touched on a few, but I'm sure you have plenty of others that you could share. Let's have two or three that come to mind.

Susan RoAne: Okay. This happened recently, and I didn't know what to say. I literally thought that I was breathless. I met an author through another author's dinner here, and he was being published by a company and I said, "Oh, who's your editor?," and he told me. One of my favorite editors who left

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and went to that company. I said, "Oh, my God, I love him. Blah, blah, blah. I always have breakfast with him and his wife when I go to New York." He looked at me. He's never really had a decent conversation with them. I thought, "How do you not do that?" I made a little connection there and I went back to him, literally a month ago I think it was, and I said, "How did your book launch go?"

Here's what he said to me. "I don't know." "You don't know?" He didn't know his numbers, didn't know what happened. He goes, "Well, I've gotten a few speaking engagements." He didn't know where it's been written, what's been done. He's done nothing to promote it. I was astonished. I thought to myself, "Yes, it's great to have a few speaking engagements, but to not know what your book is doing, who's writing about it. If your book is written up in the Chicago Tribune, and you can get the URL, send it out in a newsletter, send it out to your friends, tweet it, put it on Google Plus, and Instagram, or whatever." First of all, the people who write about you love you for helping you get the word out, but how would you not know and then help promote that?

I thought that was an incredible. I thought that was a mistake that I observed. I thought that was the dumbest thing I ever saw an author do. When you have a self-published book, you can mirror everything that's done by New York publishers, and maybe even do it better.

Susan Friedmann: I would hope so.

Susan RoAne: Yes, because here's the difference. You're in control. You can hire people. You can follow up. You want to know how my book has stayed in people's minds for so long? Because I've stayed in touch with every media person that's interviewed me. Some have become friends. They go to another venue. One person who interviewed me for Cosmo then went to Maxim, and I was quoted in Maxim five times, to which my own nephew happened to say, "Oh, aunt Susan. We read your quotes in Maxim," to which I said, "What were you doing reading it?" I think that after seeing me in Maxim, my nephews cancelled their subscription. I'm not sure, but you know what? I think we need to be open minded.

Here's one thing I did that I think was a good thing. I went to my local Barnes & Noble, and I went with a pad of paper, and I just wore jeans, because if I had to sit on the floor, it'd be okay, and I went to the magazine rack, and I looked at every magazine and thought, "What would be the link to my book, given this magazine, and who's their audience and market?" Then, you can help craft a message to the editor, based on what's in it for their readers, not what's in it for you.

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Susan Friedmann: I'm thinking that's a golden nugget. I was going to ask you for a golden nugget, but I think that's it, unless you feel that there would be a better golden nugget to leave our listeners with?

Susan RoAne: I think that was the golden nugget. What I'd like to say is, there's another one that we need do as authors, and that's how we conduct ourselves face to face. When I meet people, and they say, "What do you do?," I say, "Well, I do two things, I've written this book," or I will introduce myself as the Mingling Maven. I say, "Oh, the Mingling Maven." Before Malcolm Gladwell came out with "Tipping Point," no one knew what a maven was, but they would ask, and now, people sometimes still will ask. It gives me an opportunity to then say, "Oh, well I wrote 'How To Work A Room' which helps people turn into mingling mavens," and if you give people a nugget that they can start a conversation with, and ask a question, that's a piece of gold, because then they feel they started the conversation. Then I would say a little bit, and then I stop and say, the four magic words from "How To Work A Room," "How about you?," or "What about you?"

Then, you're in a conversation where you don't always talk about your book. You have to read, and this may be is another point. Look at as many newspapers, as many blogs, as many online curators as possible. You might be able to write a guest blog, you may have an article that you can take as part of your book, create it, and send that out, and having guest blogs, being on podcasts. If you have something that you can craft for an audience, just finding out who's out there. We now have Google and Yahoo and Bing. There's no reason that we don't have this research at our fingertips. I'll tell you what. The tough part is the energy to follow up, and this may be where you hire someone to do some of this. You can do this all yourself if you really want to be more conservative with money.

Susan Friedmann: Great tips. How can our listeners get ahold of you?

Susan RoAne: Well, this is easy. You can come to HowToWorkARoom.com. Oh, and by the way, always have a domain name for your book, and if you have something that's very special that you speak about, that your book is significant et cetera, you might want to go for the trademark. "How To Work A Room" is trademarked, and by the way, well worth every penny I've spent, and every gray hair I've had to die, because that's been an issue. But you can get ahold of me through SusanRoAne.com, and if you have a question that this is engendered, send me an email. It's so nice to get something from someone who doesn't want to sell me a Russian bride. I'd be happy to answer.

Susan Friedmann: Or Russian groom.

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Susan RoAne:

Oh, groom. No, they only want Russian brides, to which one of my friends said, "Don't be such a snob. We all need wives." "You know, actually, to tell you the truth, then my house would get cleaned." The other thing is, if you have a burning question, which by the way, Susan is the expert on this, Susan Friedmann's the expert, but if you feel you really need something you want to hear from me, how about this? 415-461-3915. Call. Here's the other thing, and this links into be different than other authors. While everyone is sending an email blast, sending a newsletter, pick up the phone and call people so they can hear your voice, your enthusiasm, your humor, and how engaging you are.

Even if they don't answer their phone, they get their messages, except for your children, because they don't ever pick up your messages. That's just a little aside, warning to you all. But the people who feature authors, the people that invite people to their podcasts, they actually listen to messages, so use the phone as your friend. Call me. If you know of any group that wants to hire someone to teach everyone how to work a room, mingle, connect, engage, build relationships, definitely call me, especially if they have a budget.