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BOOK MARKETING: Tips and Techniques to Build an Author Marketing Platform Interview with Carrie Hartunian Smith

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 multi-talented business executive Carrie Hartunian-Smith. Carrie brings a wealth of experience and tremendous passion when it comes to impacting businesses. She works with business owners and entrepreneurs to develop accelerated growth strategies in highly competitive industries. Her mission is to help you build your brand, position yourself as an expert, and create the business of your dreams. In other words, to help you stand above all the noise in your markets. Carrie, welcome to the show and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Carrie : Thank you for having me, Susan. I'm happy to be here.

Susan Friedmann: Your expertise, Carrie, is in helping authors build a marketing platform, but what exactly is an effective marketing platform? Could you share with our listeners?

Carrie : Yeah, sure. That's a great question. Before I dive into answering that specifically, let me just back up and mention this, that I work with a lot of different clients, business owners, and entrepreneurs who are looking to elevate their brand and create that further authority in the marketplace. A book is just a fabulous way to do that for a lot of different reasons, and I'm sure your listeners are already of those reasons, but what a book can really help you do is build that instant credibility, and what I find is that oftentimes they think just because they write a book and they get it up on Amazon, and all of my authors get to number one bestseller, but they think that the skies are going to open up and the leads are just going to start pouring in for them. It doesn't quite work that way, which is when start to talk about building that marketing platform. Really, there's a lot of different components. You don't have to do all of them.

One of the first things that I like to make sure that people think about,

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particularly for non-fiction books, is using that book as a marketing tool, if you will, in your tool box. That's creating value that people can opt in when they're reading your book, meaning go here to get more information. You can go to this url and download a PDF that will give you actionable steps, or go to this url and see a video of how this worked for this client. Really help them create their book into what I call a 3D experience for your potential client. What I find is that when clients are doing that, what happens is their book gets in front of their targeted audience, and if we write compelling call to actions, people are opting in, and now they have somebody who is interested in a specific piece in their book and they can start that communication through email marketing, an social media, posts, and that sort of thing. Really further that relationship with them before that person wants to buy their product or service.

I think that's an important step that a lot of non-fiction books are missing that I work with my clients in incorporating that in. Then of course, a bigger piece of building your platform is making sure that you have that online presence. All too often, I hear people, or I see their websites, and they have every social media icon across the top and the bottom of their website. They're on Pinterest, they're on LinkedIn, they're on YouTube, they're on Facebook, they're on Twitter, but when you google and click on those icons, they might have ten followers or a hundred followers, and they have no content posted there. What I would say is less is more. To start to build your platform, figure out which platform where your target audience is, and build that platform first. Don't feel like you have to be on all the platforms, or even four or five or six platforms to build your brand up and to elevate your authority, but really focus in and get one done really well, and then move to the next one. Then to the next one.

How we build it is not just about numbers. There's absolutely value in building your followers by numbers. I refer to it as ... That number refers to, I hate to say it this way, but butts in seats. The Emmy Awards hire people dressed in tuxes and formal gowns to stand in the back so when someone gets up to go to the bathroom, they can fill that seat because when the cameras pan the audience, they want it to look like a full house. My point is your numbers on your social media platforms are important to have a thousand or two thousand or three thousand followers to give you that credibility, but more importantly, or as importantly I should say, it's what is that engagement? Are you out there communicating with people on your platform, but also in other platforms where your audience is posting valuable content. People are getting something from you first that they can go and implement into their day-to-day life and to their day-to-day world. Whether you are a product or a service, this works. That helps build that media platform. When you have your book up there, people know, like,

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and trust what you're saying, and they want to buy that book. They want to get more of you through a book and how a book can serve them in their day-to-day business.

Susan Friedmann: I love the fact that you say "Less is more," because you're absolutely right. People feel as if they need to be everywhere. This idea of building just one platform just makes so much sense. However, I think something else that you said was very important is to be where your target audience is, because it's no good being on Facebook and having a thousand followers if your target audience is on LinkedIn or on Twitter.

Carrie : Exactly.

Susan Friedmann: I think it's knowing where your target audience is is really critical. Excellent. Keep going. I'm loving this.

Carrie : Okay, great. The next part about building your platform, I would say is if you do have the multiple social medias or website, or wherever you're marketing, and this might sound like a no-brainer, but I see it all too often, where people are not harmonious with their marketing. Let me give you an example. When I'm working with my clients and I'm getting ready to do a book launch, we do a pre-launch campaign, we do a day of launch campaign, and then we do a post-launch campaign. The purpose for each one of those phases ... There's a purpose for each one of those phases. The purpose for the pre-launch is to, I like to say, start beating the drum. Letting your audience know and getting it out there in the search engines that "Hey, this book is coming. It's going to solve your pain in this way." That can be a week before your book launch, that can be months before your book launch, and if it's months before, it's good to really drip out some teasers to get people really excited about it.

Your day of launch is to promote "Hey, we're launching today. Go buy my book. Today it's a discounted price, and if you buy it today, we're going to give you these bonuses that you can only get today, just to really jazz your audience to get that. That's one of the best ways that we reach number one bestseller for our authors. Then the post-launch is to keep them informed. "Hey, we hit number one in all these categories. Hey, we hit the top one hundred authors in a particular genre." I'm going to jump ahead here, but then we also talk about the media coverage that we get with that. To back up to my point of being harmonious, there's nothing worse from my marketing eye standpoint is to see you promoting a book maybe on Facebook, and you having these other platforms, whether they only have five or five hundred followers, and not having that same campaign throughout your entire brand.

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Posting your book covers everywhere where you are, on your website, on your social media platforms, on your emails, putting that in your email footers, really thinking about every branding piece that you have, and how you can incorporate that into each phase of your launch. Like I said, this point to me is being harmonious and making sure that all of your branding is harmonious during your book launch days, no matter how many weeks, days, or months that phase is.

Susan Friedmann: Now do you recommend ... You talked about websites earlier. Do you recommend that an author would have a book website or rather that they have an author website where they highlight the book?

Carrie : That's a great question. The answer that I'm going to give you I hate to give, but I'll expound on it. It really depends. It depends upon what, because I think that's just such an easy answer, right? It really depends upon what the author is hoping to accomplish. If you adopt the thought process of call to actions in your book and really making your book become what I call 3D, I complete recommend having a separate book page, and that book page is about ... The url is your book title, or as close as it can be. You have a call to action on that that says, "Hey buy my book today, send in your receipt, and we're going to send you these bonuses." It's very targeted and it's a very specific purpose for the website or that landing page if you will.

Now, it doesn't mean that your author page can't connect to it, and that that book page can't connect back to your author page, but with technology where it is today, you hear different numbers. You have anywhere from three to nine seconds to capture someone's attention. If you send them to an author page, or you send them to a larger website, they have the ability to be clicking around and you lose their interest. The phone might ring, the dog might bark, the kids might cry, and they might've been just getting ready to buy that book or buy your service, and life happens. They reboot their computer and forget that they even had your website up. That's why I like the micro sites or the landing pages, if you're really looking for that call to action and get people to opt in so you can start having that more intimate relationship with them and communicating with them from your list.

If you're an author and you're really not into the call to action piece of it, and it's more of just the authority build, you just want that continued authority, I don't think you have to have that separate site. I think your author page is fine. How you put your key words on the page could be a little bit more tricky because with a micro site or a page specifically for your book, you can be really targeted with those keywords. Again, I think it's one

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of those things that it really depends on what your end result is that you're hoping to get with your brand, but specifically with your book.

Susan Friedmann: Fair enough. Yes. I can see the difference. That makes a very big difference, depending on, as you said, what does the author want as the end result? Are they just out there to sell books, in which case obviously your book site? If they're out to sell themselves, their services, and they're adding the book as a credibility piece, obviously then it would be more of an author site. [inaudible 00:12:31] correct?

Carrie : Yeah, exactly.

Susan Friedmann: You talk about the fact that so many of your clients become bestselling authors, and I know that so many of my authors really aspire to that position. Talk to us more about how they could help make that happen.

Carrie : Yeah. I'll tell you with as many books that are on Amazon and then with as many authors that are out there, I'm surprised that more are not bestselling authors. Like anything else, there's a process to make it happen, and we follow that process. I will tell you this: creating your branding and your marketing, and creating a strategy in and of itself, and selecting a launch date, and getting your friends and family primed to go buy the book, and creating some marketing pieces that you send out to your list, becoming a number one bestseller is all about targeting a certain time period in a day, and selecting the right categories on Amazon to help launch you to get that bestseller status. I spoke to a client back almost a year ago, and he had written a great book, very targeted niche, very small, small niche, and he goes, "Yeah, I don't think I really care about the bestseller. I know people who do bestseller status, and they hid it for five minutes at three a.m. in the morning, and it just feels fake."

I said to him, "Some people might be doing that, but when I look at it, I like to look at it for the long term." The reality is, the longer that we can keep our clients at number one, or in the top ten, or in the top twenty, the better it is for the client because as you know, then Amazon rewards you with search, when people are searching on Amazon that your book shows up above some other bigger books. I would argue that having the bestseller status is important so you can say it elevates you that "hey, I'm number one bestseller." All of a sudden, people think that it's great that you're an author and you get this incredibly authority just because you're an author, but when you can say, "I'm number one bestseller," that elevates you a little higher. A lot of my clients are international bestsellers, which really makes people be like, "Wow, you're an international bestseller."

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I think it's important to get that so you have that for the credibility, but it's also important for the longevity of the book. You ask me how. Let me circle back around to that, and again, it's picking the right category selection to where you're in somewhat I consider aggressive categories that are ultra, ultra targeted to your niche, which will help you stay elevated at that number one status or in the top five or ten. Then you also go out and get some more broader categories that helps you get into a category that someone might want to see what you have to say, but not so much. It's fifty-fifty, let's put it that way. That helps Amazon serve your book up more and it helps your rankings stay higher, and again, number one ... Unless you're selling a lot of books every day, you're not going to stay number one forever. Most of my authors, I think I can say all of my authors, once we hit number one, they keep number one for at least five to seven days after the launch, and they stay in the top twenty for sometimes a month or two months, and those who continue to promote their book and sell their book, they stay elevated for a lot longer.

The how, again, without going through it step by step by step, I would say make sure you plan a strategic launch to get your friends and family, and colleagues, and even your clients, your close clients that say, "Hey, you've been with me all these years. I'm launching this book. I'd love for you to help me get it to number one bestseller." Then once you hit bestseller, then you can take that and market it to those clients that would be more impressed that you hit bestseller status, so they're not helping you get there, but they're impressed that you hit bestseller, and they want to buy the book. That's what keeps you at bestseller. Keep that marketing campaign going. Emails going out, talking about it, providing value. Giving those PDFs that complement your book that make people want to go download your book, and that keeps your sales elevated, which keeps your rankings elevated, which keeps your then authority elevated.

Susan Friedmann: I think this all goes back to, as you said right at the beginning, is having a plan, because yes, it's one thing making it to that bestseller list, but keeping it there and then keeping in contact, and having those emails, or having some other giveaway that will entice people, is really important.

Carrie : Exactly. Yeah. Then the next step or the next phase that I really encourage authors to move forward with is get that media attention for your book. It's a lot easier in today's day and age than it ever was. One of the easiest, fastest, cost-effective ways is to run a press release, because when your book hits number one bestseller, or it's highly ranked, it's not going to be there forever. We already talked about that, but if you create a press release, it's in the search engines. When people are googling you and finding out more about you, or the pain point that you solve when they see

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that press release, that creates more attention and that creates more authority. Then again, that helps elevate your status.

I think a lot of people miss that piece of it. They launch their book, whether they hit bestseller or not. I don't want to say they lose interest in it, but they don't know what to do with it. I use this analogy, and maybe it will resonate with your audience, but to me writing a book and having a book launch campaign is similar to planning a wedding. You're all excited about planning your wedding and that's the writing stage of your book, and you're putting all this thought and effort, and dotting I's and crossing T's, and really creating this great experience. Then the day of your wedding, that's the day of your book launch. You're really excited, you're nervous, "Am I going to hit bestseller? What's that going to look like?" All eyes are on you. People are watching. Then you achieve bestseller status. You say "I do," you get married.

Then the next few days of your book launch becomes your honeymoon, right? When you get married and you go on your honeymoon, you're in this ecstasy state, right? You're seeing great things, and people are congratulating you, and you have this glow about you. Same thing with your book launch. The next few days, people are congratulating you and it's this wonderful experience. Then you come home from your honeymoon, to relate to the book. Then a week or two later, all of the planning is over and you're back from your honeymoon, and you look at each other, your spouse, and you say, "Now what? Now we get to move on with our life." I think all too often, that's a relationship. All too often, people go through this book process, and when it's all said and done, they look at their book and they say, "Now what?"

Now their book can't speak back to them like a spouse could and say, "Okay, let's go do this, or let's go do that." I think authors need to look at that and say, "Okay, now what? How can I use this as a tool and leverage it in my business to help provide value to those people that I can provide the most value to?"

Susan Friedmann: That is so key. First of all, I love that analogy. I usually use the baby, they're giving birth to a baby, and then what they're going to do with this baby. I love this, I really do. Yes, that's really important is the reality of what happens after all the excitement takes place. You've talked about a couple of things with regard to either the pain point of the book, that's the highlight, the pain point the people are emphasizing, or the value that they give, and I think those, the value that a book gives is often something that an author doesn't always give enough attention to. What are your thoughts on that?

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Carrie : Yeah, absolutely. I just launched a book recently, and the client is in the financial sector. Their product, if you will, is they're trying to get people to sign up for ... It's subscription-based basically. They came to me because they wanted me to run a bestseller launch for them, and I started asking them questions about, "Okay, tell me why," and of course it's always about authority and they want the press around it. This is a pretty high profile book, and honestly I didn't realize how high profile it was until I was knee-deep in the project. When I started talking to them about it, I'm like, "Okay, someone's going to read your book, but then what? What can you give them as we read each chapter? What can they take from that that they can implement into their day?"

It's almost like when you're writing a book, you take all your little tidbits of information that you're compiling into one aspect, and that's your book. Now I like to challenge authors to say, "Okay, now let's take, whether it's one or two out of the book, or it's one out of each chapter, and highlight that, people can digest that in bite sizes." Especially with where we are with technology. People don't have the attention span. They're not going to read your book from cover to cover. The percentage of people who will read your book from cover to cover are very, very small at this point. What can you extract out of your book and highlight for that person to print, go watch, download, and have your brand in front of them at their fingertips? That looks like blog posts. That looks like motivational tweets. That looks like check lists. It can come in a lot of different bite-sized pieces, and every time you do that, that's creating value to your target audience that you will be top of mind instead of someone reading a book.

A lot of people ask that question, "What's your favorite book?" I have tons of favorite books, although I don't read books from cover to cover. I'm a skimmer. When people ask me that question, I have to stop and think. There's tons of them, but I can't think of one because I'm busy in today's day handling today's problems or whatever. My point is that if you're staying in front of them in bite-sized pieces, your book, your brand, your solution to their problem is going to stay top of mind, as opposed to anyone else's book.

Susan Friedmann: Absolutely brilliant. Mistakes, let's talk about a few of the mistakes you see authors make.

Carrie : I would say not creating what I call a 3D book. Everything that we just talked about. I would say that they write a book, they put it up on Amazon, and they don't create a relationship with it. Aside from that, getting into some nitty gritty, I would say falling in love with their title or their subtitle

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because it makes sense to them. All too often when people come to me with their books, especially non-fiction books, especially books that are going to solve a business problem, it's not being witty or trying to be creative with the title and subtitle. Everything is based on keyword. You go to a search engine, the search engine is going to serve up what you're typing in, and people are not typing in your witty subtitles. They're not. They're typing in their problem.

All too often ... Another client of mine, a recent client of mine, came to me, he was ready to launch his book, and he had this subtitle, and he'd been talking about it for years. He loves his subtitle. He was in love with his subtitle. We did a keyword analysis, because Amazon only allows you to have seven keywords or keyword phrases, and you want to capitalize on that so they serve your book up. I thought, "My goodness, I'm going to have to tell him that his book's subtitle does nothing for his book. It's catchy, it's great, but no one's going to find him." I knew he was in love with it. We did the keyword research, and I did one of those. "Hey by the way, if you really want to maximize this book, you should think about incorporating some of these keywords into your subtitle." He tossed and turned for a couple nights, and he ended up doing it, but it was really painful for him because he fell in love with his book title and his book subtitle, because it made sense to him, not, in my opinion, to his audience.

You need to fall in love with your project to create this great ... To get the creativity out of you, I get that. Then at some point, you need to step back and say, "Okay, this is a business tool. This is something that I'm going to use to attract my audience. What does my audience really want, or what are they looking for? Let me put that subtitle and that title to target them." Then of course carrying that out through the description, the book description on Amazon, because those are the three areas that Amazon searches, or scans when people are typing in their keywords.

Susan Friedmann: That's so hard not to do is to ... You're absolutely right. We do fall in love with our own stuff sometimes, and then it's, "My goodness." Yes, it doesn't mean anything to anybody else, as you rightly say, but we've had it so near and dear to us for so long, it's, why doesn't anybody love it the way I do?

Carrie : Right, yeah. It's hard. Some people, another client that I just worked with, the more high profile client that I mentioned earlier, the keywords were very salesy, and they were going for more of a higher brand feel, we didn't do it. I said, "That's fine," because their goal was something very different, but at least take a look at it. At least weigh your options, and make that decision, don't go in blind.

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- Susan Friedmann: How do our listeners get in contact with you if they want to learn more about what you can offer them?
- Carrie : Yeah, sure. My website is www.smartmarketingconsulting.com. I did a blog post almost about a year ago, and I have ... If you go to www.themarketingexpert.com, it gives you a video and I talk more about this, and then it also gives you the tips, the five different things that people I think are not doing for their books that they really should do. That's a quick guide that they can look at instead of filtering through my website.
- Susan Friedmann: Excellent. If you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget of information, what would that be?
- Carrie : Goodness. I would say spend time on your book, especially if we're talking about non-fiction books for people who really want to elevate that brand. Have their book be a truly generation for them. Spend time on your book, make sure it makes sense, make sure you have it professionally edited, but don't sit on it forever. All too often, I have authors who want everything to be just perfect. I think that's admirable and you put your brand out there, and you want it to be perfect, but sometimes perfection can be a hindrance. No matter what you put out there, someone is going to criticize it for the negative, no matter how perfect it is in your eyes. I would say if you find yourself saying, "I just have to. I just have to," and procrastinating, and "I just need to go do a little bit more research" ... The beauty of where we are with books today is that you can revise it, and you can upload it, and it really doesn't cost you that much more. Print is a little harder because once it's in print, people are going to have an outdated version.
- Some of the most popular authors out there have version one, two, three, four, five because things change or because they want to say it differently. I would say don't strive for perfection. Put your best effort forward. Make sure you look at the most important things and have it well-edited. Don't sit on it for too long, because there's people out there looking for a solution to their problem, and you have it, and I like to say the longer you keep it from the world, the longer you're able to help people. I believe that most businesses are in business because they can provide value to that person who needs it. You need to get it out there fast so you can help the right people.
- Susan Friedmann: Some valuable, priceless information. Thank you. Thank you all for taking time out of your day to listen to this interview, and 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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