

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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## BOOK MARKETING: Powerful Ways to Become a Professional Speaker Interview with Grant Baldwin

**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 celebrated keynote speaker and author Grant Baldwin. Grant is the creator of the Booked and Paid To Speak training program. His podcast and training site, The Speaker Lab, provides weekly training to speakers at all levels of their business. As a speaker, Grant has given hundreds of presentations and has spoken to over 4,000 people in 45 different states through leadership conferences, conventions, and other events. His book and curriculum for students, Reality Check, is taught in 400 schools around the country. Grant, welcome to the show and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

**Grant Baldwin:** Thanks, Susan. I appreciate you letting me hang out with you.

**Susan Friedmann:** Grant, you're a nationally recognized keynote speaker, but as you well know, we've all got a story about how we got into the speaking business. Would you mind sharing a little bit of yours?

**Grant Baldwin:** Yeah, absolutely. I actually, in high school, I was really involved in my local church and my youth group. My youth pastor had a really big impact on my life, and so I ... Really, that's kind of what I wanted to do was, I wanted to be a ... It seemed like a cool gig. I enjoyed doing a little bit of speaking here and there as a high school student. I was just like, "Man, if I could be a youth pastor, if I could be a professional teenager, that'd be a fun gig," so I went to Bible college, was a youth pastor at a local church for a little while after that. Parts of it I liked, parts of it I didn't like, but one of the things I really, really enjoyed, and one of the things that I felt like I was decent at was speaking. As a youth pastor, I was doing some speaking to the students, and then from time to time, I would speak on the weekends, and big church. I really enjoyed it, felt like I was decent at it.

When I left that position, I knew I really liked the idea of speaking, and in fact, in college I worked for a guy who was a full-time speaker and just kind of helped on the ... Almost the backend, admin-type stuff, and helping him

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with logistics and travel and booking, and that kind of stuff. I knew it was a possibility. I just wasn't sure, like what's the path to go about making this happen? One of the lines I like to use, and I think resonates with a lot of people, is, "I had the potential, but I needed the plan." I had the potential, but I needed the plan. I knew I was a decent speaker. I knew I could do it. I just didn't know how to do it. How do you actually find bookings, and how do you get started, so actually, I attended a speaker training in Dallas when I was just getting started, and ...

I knew that just by going to a training or investing in a course, or just investing myself in general, I knew that by getting a plan from someone who is where I wanted to be would really make a big difference. It just shortened my learning curve and helped to increase the rate at which I could get bookings and just get going. That's what I did early on, and it was a lot of ... Early on, it was a lot of just hustling, and just kind of figuring out who are some organizations and conferences and groups that are looking for speakers for, that have the type of audiences that I would speak to, and to the type of topics that I would speak about, and beginning to reach out to them and just offering, "Here's what we do, and here's some of the clients that we've worked with." A lot of it, in the beginning, was just a lot of email, a lot of phone calls, a lot of just building relationships and building connections with potential clients.

It was a slow, gradual process, so the first year we did something like 15 or 20 events, and then the next year we did around 30 events, and then 40, and then 50, and then 60. It was just kind of a slow, gradual build from there. The longer you speak, the easier it gets to find gigs. You get a lot of repeat business, a lot of referrals, a lot of word of mouth, but a lot of it, especially in the beginning, is just, it's a lot of kind of grinding it out. It's a lot of hustle. It's a lot of very tedious, non-glamorous, non-sexy, just work to build those relationships. Yeah, that's kind of how I got going.

Susan Friedmann: I'm a bit scared to ask you the next question, because it's: What advice would you give a first-time author who wants to add speaking to help build their author platform?

Grant Baldwin: There are 3 questions I always challenge new speakers to think about. Why do you want to speak? Who do you want to speak to? What do you want to speak about? Why, who, and what. Let's take that first question of "why." Why is it that you want to speak in the first place. Just because you have a book, fiction or nonfiction or otherwise, why is it that you want to speak? What is it that you hope speaking will do? Is it something that, "I just enjoy it, it's fun," or, "I want to speak in order to sell more books," or "I want to speak just to meet readers," or "I want to speak to, maybe I have like

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coaching or consulting that I offer, and so I'm trying to pick up new clients that way"? What is the value in speaking for you? Really taking the time to consider that, because that'll kind of determine the types of events that you might want to speak at, and which types of things might be a good fit for you.

Then the other 2 questions of who you want to speak to, and what is it that you want to speak about. A huge mistake that most new speakers make is that they would say, "Well, I just want to talk to people. I just want to talk to humans. I don't really ... What do you want me to speak about? I can speak about anything." Well, the fact of the matter is that you can't. You can't talk to anybody about anything. That just doesn't work, so you want to get really, really clear about who you speak to, and what it is that you speak about. From there, then you can start to kind of determine what are some potential events and opportunities that may be a good fit. For an author, if you already have a book out, I would strongly recommend that you speak on the subject or topic that your book is about, and that you would speak at the types of events, organizations, and groups where your readers might gather. Again, this can apply to both fiction and nonfiction.

Let's just say, hypothetically, let's just say you have a fiction book about some historical love story, all right? I'm just making this up. You have some fiction story about that. Well, what types of events would your readers attend? What types of associations would they be a part of? What types of conferences might they go to? Some of them may be specifically for around books, or maybe it's just around that genre or around that topic. I would start looking into that. The same thing is true on the nonfiction side. If you have a book that teaches accountants how to do customer service for the clients that they work with, then figuring out what are the types of conferences, associations and groups, where accountants may gather, where it would be a good fit for your particular, your subject matter. I think a mistake that, again, some authors make is, "I have this book on this certain topic, on topic A, but I want to go speak on topic Z to something that's totally unrelated."

You're really kind of missing the opportunity there of bridging the gap and connecting it with the audience that you speak to, and for what the book is about. The other thing, too, is that when you speak to an audience that is a good fit for your book, it is a great, great way to generate back-of-the-room sales. Oftentimes, you may go speak at a conference, or an event, and whether it's a 30, 45, 60-minute presentation of some type, there's only so much you can cover in that time, but it's great to say, "Hey, by the way, if you're looking for something more, here's a book that I have on the subject or topic. We just scratched the surface today, but if you're wanting

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something more, then here's my book for 10 or 20 bucks," or something. You can generate a lot of great business that way, a lot of great extra revenue from speaking. I know for me, personally, you had mentioned, I've got a self-published book that was sold over 30,000 copies of, and physical copies, actual physical copies, not PDF or Kindle versions at all.

I would say that probably like 95% of those book sales have come as a direct result of speaking. I went, I spoke, people liked it, they lined up to buy a book for 10 bucks. You can really, really do well on just a financial standpoint by having a book, but you want to make sure, again, that the book ties in with the audience and the topic that you're speaking about.

Susan Friedmann: I had to laugh, very silently of course, when you talked about the fact that many first-time speakers just want to speak, and they'll speak about anything. "Just tell me what you want, and I'll speak about it." I've seen that so many times, so that was quite amusing.

Grant Baldwin: Well, and here's, just to jump in on that, they, authors understand this as well, but sometimes there's the disconnect when it comes to speaking. For example, if someone's listening to this, and they have a book, and we were to ask you, "What shelf on Barnes & Noble would your book fit in? What section would it go in?" If you are thinking, "Well, look, it could go anywhere," well, we all know that that's not true. That's not going to work that way, so you know exactly who your book is for, and you know exactly what the book is about, and you know where it fits in the scope of a Barnes & Noble. You know what type of shelf and what category or section it would fit well into. You have to do the same type of thing with speaking. You can't just say, "I'm speaking to anyone and everyone about anything." That just does not work. The same thing is true with a book, the same thing is true with speaking.

Susan Friedmann: Yes, and that's so true. I mean, when somebody comes to me and they say, oh, when I say, "Well, what's your book about, and who is it for," and they'll say, "Well, my book is a universal message, and it's for everyone." I love the little Barnes & Noble analogy that hits home really well. Talking about back-of-the-room sales, I think something else is the fact that people want to take a piece of you home with them, so they'll buy the book whether they really want it or not, but somehow it's that connection to you that they really want, and buying your book often fills that for them. What do you think about that?

Grant Baldwin: Yeah, no, I think one of the challenges with speaking is that, again, most people won't remember a lot of what it is that a speaker says, and so having a book can work really, really well as a tool to not only reinforce

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what it is that you said, and just kind of add to it, but also, there's just going to be a lot of stuff in the book that you just didn't have time to cover in a talk or presentation. A book allows you to go deeper, much deeper on a topic than typically what a usual speech format would allow. Again, I mean, just thinking about it from a practical standpoint, if you have a, let's say, a 150, 250-page book, and you're giving a 45-minute talk, I mean, there's just, there's only so much that you can cover, and only so much that you can talk about. The other thing I found to be true is that a book works really, really well as almost like a souvenir or a memento of a talk or presentation.

If someone hears your talk, and it really has a big impact on their life, they may be interested in buying the book. Sure, they may be interested in reading it, of course, but they may just be interested in, "I just want to remember this experience, this moment." A book can work really, really well, in that. Another thing that a book can do well is, there's times where you see a speaker that you really enjoy and that you just want to support. I just, I like their message, I like what they're doing, and so I just want to support them in their work, and so a simple way to do that is by spending 10 or 15 or 20 bucks on a book. A book can work really, really well for a speaker in a variety of different ways. Another thing we haven't even really touched on that I think is relevant is that having a book can work really well for credibility on a topic. Oftentimes, in our culture and in our world today, is, we associate credibility and expertise with authors.

"Wow, you've written a book. Wow, so you must really know something on this subject or topic." Oftentimes, organizations and groups that are looking for a speaker, they're not just looking for a speaker, they're looking for an expert who happens to speak on a certain subject or topic. A book can help you in that. I think there's a misconception that in order to get booked to speak, you have to have a book. I don't think that is true, but I will say that if you have a book, it absolutely can help your cause if you are trying to market to the types of organizations and groups where your book topic would be a good fit.

Susan Friedmann: I'm going to send you a virtual hug for saying that. Yes, it's a message that I put out there a lot. A question that I get asked a lot too is, how does an author go about finding and booking speaking gigs? I know this is very central to your training programs, but what kind of advice would you give?

Grant Baldwin: There's a lot of different ways to find speaking engagements, but I think one of the simplest ways, and, again, to take a step back here, this is a misconception that I think a lot of speakers have is, "Okay, I got my book. I wrote my book, and now I'm just, it's out there, it's on Amazon, and I put it

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on my website, and so now I just sit back and I wait for the phone to ring." It just doesn't work like that. If you build it, they will not come. One of the things that we always taught is that instead of waiting for events and organizations to find you, I would prefer that people be much more proactive in going to find particular conferences or events. One of the simplest ways to do that, actually, is through Google. I've always focused a lot more on conferences, associations, groups that are already planning on hiring a speaker.

It is much more difficult to convince an organization or a group to book you if they've never booked a speaker before, but if they're planning on hiring a speaker, they're planning on bringing in a speaker, it's a lot easier to get your foot in the door with that particular group. Look for groups and organizations that are already booking speakers. Then, from that point, then you can begin to reach out to them. I'll give you kind of an analogy here. If, at the time of this recording, I'm home in Nashville, and it is blazing hot outside, so if someone shows up to my door and say, "Hey, would you like me to shovel your driveway and get all the snow out of here?" You are asking about something that I have zero need for at all right now. Right? If they come to me in 6 months, and it's dumping snow, and they say, "Hey, do you want me to shovel your driveway?" Well, I have that need at that point, so they have what it is that I'm looking for. The same thing is true whenever it comes to a speaker.

If I am a speaker and I speak to accountants about customer service, and Susan, I reach out to you, and you host a conference for accountants, I have what you are looking for. You are looking for speakers who are going to come in and talk to your audience, those accountants. You're looking for people that can talk to accountants about their business or something. I have what it is that you are looking for, so when I reach out to you, I'm not trying to harass you or annoy you or spam you or anything like that, but I'm just saying, "Hey, Susan, I just came across your New York Accountants Association conference in October. It looks amazing. I was curious if you've started reviewing speakers yet?" Just something simple like that, just to introduce yourself, and to let them know who you are. That's really what you're trying to do. Just using Google, and just literally old-fashioned going out and kind of digging around and finding organizations or groups that may be a good fit. That works extremely well, and is extremely effective.

Other little things, whenever you speak at a conference or an event, always asking for referrals, and always asking that particular client that you worked with, "Hey, who are some other potential organizations or groups that you think may be a good fit for what it is that I do?" Referrals is extremely valuable. Building relationships and networking with other

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speakers in your particular niche or topic, so if you're speaking to accountants, who are some of the other accounting speakers? The reason this works extremely well is, there's going to be times where you get invited to an event, and you can't do it. You're already booked, you're on vacation, something happened. You want to be able to refer someone else, and someone else may want to refer you for events. There may be a time where you are talking to a particular client and their budget is just much lower than you're willing to accept, but you're able to say, "Hey, I can't make that work, but hey, have you talked to my friend John over here? John would be a great fit for you. I know he speaks to accountants as well."

Another thing about the way most conferences and associations work is that if I go speak at a conference this year, and even if I do a great job, they typically won't rehire me for another 3, 4, 5 years, and so they want the audience to turn over. They just want ... They want to bring in some other fresh faces, which is fine, which is totally understandable. As a speaker, I would love to be able to go back to that client and say, "Hey, I know that you won't hire me again for another 4 or 5 years, but hey, have you met my friend Susan? Susan would be awesome for your event." Then I know that Susan's probably out there doing that for me as well, so building relationships with other speakers is really effective. There's a lot of different ways that you can find and book speaking engagements, but the bottom line is, I would say, is don't just sit back and wait for people to magically find you.

Now, again, the longer you speak, the more that does happen, but especially when you're getting started, don't just wait and to be dependent on someone hopefully magically stumbling across you. Be more proactive in going out and finding the types of events and organizations and groups that you would be a good fit to speak to.

- Susan Friedmann: I think that speaks to building up that credibility within a niche market, because you're less likely to come across as many competitors in that environment. There are fewer people speaking, so you have more opportunities there.
- Grant Baldwin: Totally. Absolutely.
- Susan Friedmann: You've spoken about a few mistakes that speakers make. Can you give us more?
- Grant Baldwin: We've talked a lot about the marketing side of speaking. One thing I would say that, on the actual presentation side, actual, your actual presentation, your ability to speak, is one of your best tools. Meaning, if you're great at

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booking, but then you show up and you suck as a speaker, it's really, really hard to build a business that way. The same thing is true with books. If you are great at marketing your book, but the book is just not good, it's hard to build a readership, it's hard to build a following by having a subpar book. You want to make sure that your talk itself is really, really solid, and I think one of the best ways to do that is by practicing and rehearsing. This is something that a lot of times we just have this misconception that good speakers, the best speakers in the world, they just get up and they just wing it. They're just natural. They just shoot from the hip. That is not true at all. They spend hours and hours and hours practicing, rehearsing, going over the talk, pacing ...

I spend hours pacing in my office, pacing hotel rooms, pacing backstage, looking like a crazy man, just talking to myself, just going over, and over, and over, and over the talk, so that by the time I get up on stage, I'm very, very prepared. I'm very, very confident, because I've gone over it. I'm not just kind of, "Well, I'll just go up there and talk and ramble, and let's just see what happens." Do not do that. Professional speakers spend a lot of time practicing, rehearsing, and going over their material, so, again, when they get up on stage, they feel confident and ready to go.

Susan Friedmann: I'm pleased you mentioned that, because, as you said, a professional speaker makes it look so easy when they get up there and, as you say, you're prepared, you speak. It sounds as if you are winging it, but behind the scenes, you've done a lot of, lot of work to get to where you're at.

Grant Baldwin: Yeah, you're exactly right. I mean, the best speakers in the world, they make it look natural. They make it look like, "Oh, well, I could do that." That's the case with a lot of professionals and a lot of different things. They just make it look effortless, but the truth is, is that it is a lot of work. It's a lot of behind-the-scenes preparation and practice that most people just don't realize and don't think about.

Susan Friedmann: Any other big mistakes that you see authors or speakers make?

Grant Baldwin: Just from a marketing perspective, one thing that I would mention is that it's really, really important to have both a website and ideally have a demo video. A website, you want to be able to communicate that you are a speaker. This is something that sometimes people are like, "Well, why does a ... Nobody ever hires me. Nobody books me." "Well, if nobody knows you're a speaker, then why would we consider hiring you? I didn't even know you were a speaker." You want to make sure on your website that you are communicating that you speak, and that these are some of the subjects and topics that you might speak about. The other thing I would say

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is that it's important to have a demo video. Think of a demo video like a movie trailer. You take like a 90-minute movie, you boil it down to 2 or 3 minutes. Within those 2 or 3 minutes, you have a good idea of what the movie's about, of who's in it, what the plot is, what the storyline, all of that stuff based on that demo video, or based on that movie trailer.

The point of a movie trailer is to make people want to see more, and that's really what a demo video is trying to do, is it's ... Let's say you give a 45 or 60-minute talk. You boil it down to just 2, 3, 4 minutes or so, just to give people a good overview of, "Here's who I am. This is what I talk about. Here's how I ... This is kind of my style. This is how I interact with an audience," because it's really difficult for an organization or an event planner to want to book you if they've never seen you before, if they have no idea. Are you someone that's more serious? Are you more casual? Are you more funny? Are you more sad? Are ... I have no idea what your ... Maybe your style just doesn't fit what I'm looking for for our particular audience or group. Having that demo video is a really important piece.

I think sometimes we can feel intimidated of whenever it comes to a video, like it's got to be this really professional, fancy, high-quality, multi-camera ... I got to hire a big, a Hollywood production crew and video crew. No, no, no, no, you don't have to do that at all. My very first demo video was me speaking to a group of about 40 people. I borrowed a little Handycam from a friend. I put it on a tripod at the side of the room. The audio wasn't that great. The acoustics were bad. The lighting was terrible, but that's what I had in the beginning. I edited it myself, using Windows Movie Maker, and just, it was just like some drag-and-drops of it. It was not a fancy video at all, but I took what I had, and I did it with excellence. That worked.

I've iterated on my videos several times since then, and so today we have a really, really sharp demo video, but in the beginning, I think a key thing with both websites and demo videos is to work with what you've got, and improve as you go. Work with what you've got and improve as you go. You can't look at some movie trailer and think, "My demo video is never going to look like that." Well, no, it probably won't, but work with what you've got. Where you're at right now, do it with excellence. I think that way you can at least get started, instead of just thinking, "Well, I don't have the budget," or, "I just don't know ... I don't have the video equipment." You don't need anything fancy. I've seen some video, some really well done demo videos that were shot on iPhones. You can have an iPhone, turn it horizontally, and get a really, really good, crystal clear image, so you can totally do that and use a couple iPhones together and have a multi-camera shoot that works just fine.

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Susan Friedmann: What sage advice. How can our listeners get ahold of you to find out more?

Grant Baldwin: Yeah, on the speaking stuff, people can stop by. We have a podcast and a website where we teach a lot of this stuff and go more in depth on it. The website is [thespeakerlab.com](http://thespeakerlab.com). The podcast, it's the same name, The Speaker Lab. Yeah, feel free to stop by, check that out. We also have free trainings on a regular basis where we're teaching this more in depth, and so if people are interested in that, they can go to [freespeakerworkshop.com](http://freespeakerworkshop.com).

Susan Friedmann: If you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget of information, what would that be?

Grant Baldwin: Yeah, I think the biggest thing, and we've kind of touched on this throughout, would just be to take action. It is really, really easy to be overwhelmed with all the different things, that it may feel like it takes in order to get a speaking engagement, but it really doesn't, when you really boil it down and simplify it. Get clear on why, who, and what. Make sure you have your website and video. Start reaching out to people. I mean, that's really it. Again, there's a bunch of other things that you could have, but you don't need those things right now. The simplest thing to do is just to take action on what it is that we've covered and talked about. I get it. It can feel intimidating. It can feel overwhelming in the same way that when you're getting ready to write a book, and you're staring at that blank screen, and you're staring at that cursor that's just flashing there, and you're just going like, "What am I going to say? What am I going to write about? What is this?"

It feels so overwhelming, but the way that you write a book is that you just start. You just start typing. You just get words on the paper. You know some of those words are going to be really, really good, and some of them are not going to be good. The same thing is true with speaking, is, "I'm going to begin to reach out to people. I'm going to begin to go actually speak. I'm going to do some free things just to get better and to improve." Sometimes it's going to go really, really well, and sometimes it's not, but the way that you become a better writer is that you write. The way that you become a better speaker is that you speak. Rather than just overthinking it, just begin to take small, incremental steps of bravery towards finding and booking speaking engagements.

Susan Friedmann: That is so true. I remember when I first got into the business, I always wanted to read about how to do it, and in the speaking business, you've just got to do it. You just have to get out there and speak and speak and speak. Whether you do it for free, or whether you do it paid, just speak.

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Anybody who will listen to you.

Grant Baldwin: Totally-

Susan Friedmann: It's how you get better.

Grant Baldwin: Yeah, and again, the same thing is true with writing. I joke about it, sometimes, with, I've got 3 daughters, and so if I was teaching one of my daughters to ride a bike, the way that she learns to ride a bike is not by watching YouTube videos. It's not by reading blog posts. It's not by watching a TED talk. It's by actually riding the bike. There's going to be times it goes well. There's going to be times where she falls and skins her knee, but the way that you get better is that you actually do it. Again, that's true with writing, that's true with publishing, that's true with speaking. That's true with a lot of things in life, is just beginning to take little bits of action.

Susan Friedmann: Well, thank you for sharing such practical and really dynamic information for our listeners, and thank you all for taking time out of your precious 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.