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BOOK MARKETING: How to Be More Result-Oriented to Boost Marketing Interview with Jeff Blackman

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 business results specialist Jeff Blackman. He's a speaker, author, success coach, broadcast personality, and lawyer. In addition to being one of my favorite National Speakers Association colleagues, Jeff is the author of multiple books and the recipient of numerous awards, including the National Speakers Association Council of Peers Award for Excellence Speaker Hall of Fame, which is a lifetime award for speaking excellence and professionalism. His uniquely creative services, carefully crafted programs, bottom-line coaching, and learning systems help clients drive relationships, revenue, results and rewards. Since 1982, Jeff has shared his positive and profit-producing messages with Fortune 500 companies, entrepreneurial-driven organizations, solo practitioners, and association audiences around the world. His free monthly e-zine, The Results Report, is read by subscribers in 58 countries.

I'm excited to welcome to the show my dear friend and colleague of over 27 years. Jeff, thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Jeff Blackman: Thank you. This is going to be a ball.

Susan Friedmann: Jeff, you specialize in helping people become adaptive, creative, strategic thinkers, problem solvers, solution providers. What's some advice that you can offer our authors to help them build a results-oriented business?

Jeff Blackman: It's really an interesting question, and let me give you a perspective. First mine, which is unimportant, and then a client's, which is really important. You and I have been friends for 27 years. We first met at the Dallas Convention for the National Speakers Association. At those speakers conventions, people have a tendency to say, "This is what I speak on," so I used to focus on what I speak on. I'm a speaker, I'm a trainer, I'm a consultant. I very quickly found out, no one cared, because that was about me. Then Jim Allen, an absolutely wonderful guy, really smart guy, the president of multiple companies that I helped him grow, he said to me one

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day, decades ago, he said, "You know, Jeff, I don't think of you as a speaker, as a trainer, or as a consultant." He said, "I really think of you as a business growth specialist," and that was an epiphany. I figured, if that's how a client thinks of me, that's really how I need to describe myself. When someone says, "Jeff, what do you do?" I'll say something like what I'm about to say, or an abbreviated version, but something akin to, "I'm a business growth specialist who helps CEOs, entrepreneurs, the senior leadership teams and sales people sleep really, really well at night."

What happens is people go, "Really, well, how do you do that?" I go, "Well, it differs with everyone. Tell me more about you, your business. Your challenges, your hopes, your dreams." The real key, if you want a results orientation, is stop focusing on yourself, and instead really focus on the hopes, the dreams, the desires of others, because whether we're talking about the spoken word, or the printed word, I always tell people, there are only 2 driving motivators, Susan, for everything that we do in life, whether it's personal or professional. 2 driving motivators, that's it. Would you like to hear them?

Susan Friedmann: I would love to hear them, and I think our listeners would, too.

Jeff Blackman: Number 1. The only thing that other people invest in is your ability to deliver to them a more favorable future. That's it. All they want is a more favorable future. The second driving motivator is how can you improve one's condition? If you've got the ability through the spoken word or through our focus today, especially, the written word, whether it's going to be something informative, something that's going to be how-to, something that's barely going to be entertaining, inspirational. Whatever it might be, if those words, those prose, those thoughts, ideas, have got the ability to either help someone attain a more favorable future, or to improve their condition, then what you've done is you've created merely a reader into potentially a fan, a believer, even a zealot.

Here's the real good news. They spread the word. They want to read more of what you will write, because they know they'll have a positive impact upon their life. When you have a positive impact upon their life, guess what? It just did the same thing in return for yourself. Make the focus them before you ever make the focus you.

Susan Friedmann: That's such powerful information, and just turning your attention, as you say, on the other person because it's so easy for us to be self-focused but forgetting, of course, that it's the other person focused, and that's what they're really interested in. They care about themselves and not about you, and you should care about them. Thank you for that. Another concept that

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you teach is how to focus your power, turn your knowledge into action, turn your dreams into reality, and generate results. Can you share some tips on how our listeners can do any of that, if not all of it?

Jeff Blackman:

Your question actually implies the answer, the word 'focus.' Focus is a big deal, Susan. The difficulty is that even as adults, adults are often attracted to the next shiny object. "Oh, that's neat. Oh, wait a minute. Yeah. Let me focus on that. Oh, wait a minute. That's a really cool possibility." What happens is we're easily distracted, and distraction is really problematic, so I am incredibly focused. My wife might say intense or annoying, and you know Cheryl as well. You've known her for 27 years, but when I'm in focus mode, I'm in focus mode, and discipline is a word not only that I believe in, but I stare at it. It is literally a word that is framed in my office, because what takes place is that we get time, but it's finite. It is not infinite. It is finite.

I love when people talk about, "Gee, I need to save time." Guess what? Impossibility. It will not happen. You cannot save i.e. 60 minutes today and then say, "Hey, you know what? It's the fourth quarter, it's where all the holidays. Yeah. Those 60 minutes that I saved in the summer, I'm going to use them now around Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa," whatever you choose to observe or not observe, you cannot save time. 1,440 minutes. That's all you get each day. 1440. The song from the music "Rent" in terms of 525,600, how do you measure the year in a life? That's all you get. Time is finite. Therefore, you've got to be very particular in terms of how you choose to manage yourself, not your time. I will often meet people who say to me, "When do you find the time to write?" When I carve out the time. Not that easy.

Here is a good example. We've got something in Chicago called summer. It lasts for about 3 days. As a result of that, you really need to take advantage of summer before the snow and the wind and yick weather starts to hit. I was up at about 3:30 this morning. By about 4, 4:15 at the latest, I was already writing. I was then finished writing by about 6 or 6:15 because I've got an ongoing supply that I must supply in terms of my loose paper columns, or my blog, or magazine columns, or new entries as I'm doing the edit of a new edition, for example, of Peak Your Profits, which will be the 5th edition. By 6:15, I was done. It let me then jump on the bike, go out for about 6 to 7 miles, and then still get back to shower again to have an 8 AM breakfast meeting. Yes, a bunch was accomplished, but only because I focused the time that I wanted to devote. I always tell people who want to write, "Carve out time for you." Literally make a date with yourself. This is your writing time. Some people do it in the AM, which is often my preference. Some people do it in the PM. Just find the time to write.

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Years ago, at a National Speakers Association meeting, Susan, someone who you know but I will not mention their name, this woman said to me, "I'm really working on this book." I go, "Well, super." She goes, "This is the year that it's going to come out." I go, "That's exciting." I said, "Out of curiosity, how long you been working on the book?" Her response, "10 years." It just wasn't going to happen, because she didn't allow herself the focus, the discipline, the carving of time to make that something of significance, an initiative, a priority, in her life. Writers need to write. If you want to speak, speak. The only way you get really good at something is by doing it over and repeatedly learning from mistakes, and one other key thing to focus is, that also includes creativity.

What I mean by that is be observant of the world. Pay attention. Open your eyes. Look. Listen. As writers, we've got the great benefit of being able to eavesdrop on conversations and that allows us to, "Uh-huh. I can use that, either in a book, a column, in an article," whatever it might be. Very simple example. One of my books is called "Carpe AM, Carpe PM: Seize Your Destiny." Yes, it's a play on 'carpe diem', seize the day, but that wasn't the inspiration for the book title. The book title's inspiration came from years ago, when our kids were significantly younger. We were in Orlando, so we were doing the traditional Disney thing as a family. Then I saw a bus go by that had this billboard, and it said, "Carpe PM, seize the night," and was a reference to a disco in Orlando. I went, "Whoa. I could turn that potentially into a book title." My first call was immediately to my attorney, IP attorney, fellow by the name of Mark List. Mark and I had been friends since the age of 5, and I said, "Here's what I just saw go by on a billboard. Can I adapt that without any IP concern?" Because I'm always focused on what's my intellectual property and I never cross the line to anyone else's IP because that's significant. You do always what's the right thing, always what's ethical. Mark said, "Jeff, absolutely no concern."

As a result of that one billboard, I was able to then create the title "Carpe AM, Carpe PM: Seize Your Destiny." Focus, but also be creative in terms of both listening and observing.

Susan Friedmann: That creativity as you say, and paying attention, that was brilliant. That was absolutely brilliant. This whole idea of being disciplined and focused, it's hard sometimes if you're creative. I'm often all over the place, and that focus, as you said. I make an appointment with myself because if I don't, nothing gets done. Do I always keep that? Not always, but about 80, 85% of the time I do. I feel okay about that.

Jeff Blackman: Well, life gets in the way of life. As a result, I always say to folks, "Hey,

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listen. Stuff is going to happen." Sometimes the stuff is going to be piled higher and deeper than we ever expected, because business will influence personal and personal will influence business, and you've got to decide what's important or what are your priorities. My priorities are pretty simple. If it's a choice between business or family, family is always the priority. As a result of that, my clients, they know that.

Years ago, when I first started my business in the 80's, that really wasn't the belief system, at least amongst a lot of guys. Women thankfully understood that principle real early, but I found that as I started to get older, and as I had children, and my clients were of the same age, and they started to have children, they started to get it, too. I remember with one client saying to me, it was the CEO of a multi-billion dollar company. He had said to me, "Hey listen, I'd love for us to be able to get together tonight." This was out of town. This was in Indianapolis, and he said, "I'd love to get together tonight, but I'm not going to be able to because I made a commitment to my daughter. I'm the coach or assistant coach of her soccer team." This conversation took place probably a week before this actual meeting in Indianapolis was supposed to happen. I said to him, "Wait a minute, you're the soccer coach?" He went, "Yeah." I said, "Well, I played 4 years of high school soccer." I said, "I also played for my fraternity before I destroyed my knees playing soccer and other sports." I said, "What if I bring my cleats, and I'll help you coach the practice?"

He said, "Are you serious?" I said, "Yeah, it'd be fun." He says, "Really?" I go, "Sure. Let's do that." What happened is we then went to the soccer practice. We left his office. We had changed our clothes at his office, went to soccer practice. I then went back to his home, and we had dinner in his home, and then literally, Susan, on his dining room table, he signed a very large retainer agreement. I'm convinced a lot of the things that contributed to that were the things that I did that were personal related.

Let me just give you a real simple business theory for everybody listening. People talk about relationships, but what happens is, they don't dig deep enough. When I talk about a strategy called relationship power. I talk about the little r and the big R. Real quickly, here's the distinction. Little r is what we talk about in terms of traditional relationship building. It's your humanity and your sincerity and your dignity and your courtesy. It's your ability to be a good person or what you and I and others might call a mensch. A mensch is just, be a good person. That's where most people stop in terms of relationship building.

You then have got to get to the big R, and the big R is being a business growth specialist, and that's where you help others do things like improve

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performance, productivity, profitability, maximize gain, minimize loss. If you've only got one little r, great person, but you're one burrito short of a combination plate, that's a problem. If you've only got big R, you're really smart but not a nice person, that's a problem. If you put little r together with big R, that is a powerful combination for success, whether we're talking about speaking, training, consulting, or even writing, because when I write, and you've gotten The Results Report, my e-zine, for years, you know I focus on business stuff, but, I've got a parting section called "Coffee Break for the Mind." I'll talk about many times, my family. Something they did that was serious that's got a message, or something they did that was funny that's got a message. People tell me, they go, "Hey, we love The Results Report, but we go to the Coffee Break section first because we know guaranteed there is going to be something about your family or you will make us laugh, and we look forward to that on a monthly basis." That goes back to, help others obtain a more favorable future, help them improve their condition, and if you can do it by touching both their mind and their heart, that, too, is a very powerful combo to follow.

Susan Friedmann: Let's focus on some mistakes that you see entrepreneurs and solopreneurs make. What are some of the common mistakes that you see these people making?

Jeff Blackman: There's no great manna from heaven here. It's pretty simplistic because there are certain principles that always stand the test of time. That's one of the things that I always tell people is that principles stand the test of time because they should be etched in stone. That's why they're called principles. The key is how do you convert the principle into practice. Just simple things. Honor your deliverables. If you say you are going to do it, do it. There is no room for an excuse.

Now. I get it. On occasion, as we alluded to earlier, stuff happens. People are very understanding, but I know on a Tuesday that I need to send to my editor a Peak Your Profits column for one of the newspapers that I write for. If I don't get it there by Tuesday, Bill is going to be shooting me an email that says, "Um, column this week?" I always honor that commitment. The only time that I have not been able to get him a column by a Tuesday because I am nuts about that deliverable, is if there's something that has taken place in my family that's medical related, that's family priority over business, Bill gets it. My clients also know before I hang up with them, or even prospects, "Okay, let's quickly review"... Here's an example, Susan. "Here are the deliverables. I've promised that you will get," and I reiterate it. "Yet I also need for you to please send me what you said you would."

Deliverables go in both directions. It is not unilateral. If you are truly to

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have a relationship based upon the quality, then what that requires is, it work in both directions. You can't control what somebody else does. I can only control what it is that I do. Therefore, I'm nuts about deliverables, and I make sure that they're always honored. It is a very simple thing for folks to embrace, because when you do that, that catapults you. Most people talk a good game, but then they don't deliver. Unfortunately, I'll often say to an audience, "When all is said and done, more is said than done. Be a doer, not a sayer." I stress to people, "You're not compensated for intent. You're compensated for results." Grandiose plans, yeah. They're cool. They're nice, but really your results, that's what will inform the world of your achievement and your success.

Susan Friedmann: Honor your deliverables. I like that. What other mistakes do you see people making?

Jeff Blackman: Other mistakes really go back to something we had mentioned earlier, and that is just lack of focus, taking too many different roads to reach your destination. I'll give everyone listening what I call the world's fastest strategic plan. It really is. I spend a lot of time with clients in terms of what are your objectives, your initiatives, your challenges, your goals, how are we going to be able to measure them, what are the metrics and the analytics. That's a wonderful process. However, here is the world's fastest strategic plan. 3 questions. Number 1. Where are you? Number 2. Where you would like to be? Number 3. How would you like to get there? That's it. If you answer those 3 questions, that helps you to successfully reach your destination.

It's absurd to think that I would head to O'Hare or Midway, or you would head to any major airport near your home in Lake Placid, or go to La Guardia, or Kennedy, or whatever it might be, get to the airport, and they said, "Gee, Susan, nice to see you again. Where are you going today?" And you said, "Um, I don't know. Why don't you pick the city?" Ridiculous. We know where we're headed when we get to the airport. Not only do we know where we're headed, they give us the departure time. They even give us the ETA. We know not only when we'll take off, but when we'll land. We wouldn't fly any other way.

In life and business, people often don't do that. Very simply again, where are you, where would you like to be, and how would you like to get there. That gives you choice. It gives you flexibility. That's one other important thing in terms of a mistake... Well, maybe not a mistake, but maybe a thought process. The thought process is only control what you can control. Don't worry about other people's choices, other people's behaviors. You've got no control over them. I'll say to people, you can worry, but it's kind of

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like spending time in a rocking chair. It's an interesting thing to do, but you get nowhere. Rocking chairs don't go anywhere, which is one of the reasons why they have rocking chairs, by the way, in a lot of airports around the country. It gives you something to do to spend idle time as you wonder, "When is my flight taking off?" That rocking chair doesn't get you any closer to the gate or your destination. Forget about worry. It doesn't help you solve.

One other thing related to a thought process. I do this on a regular basis if I have a challenge personally or professionally. I think of John Wooden (check). Your listeners might be familiar with John Wooden, the great coach at UCLA of the men's basketball team. He won multiple championships. I think it was actually 10 championships he won at UCLA. My favorite quote from John A. Wooden, Susan, is that things work out best for those who make the best out of the way things work out. I love that-

Susan Friedmann: Powerful.

Jeff Blackman: -because it places total responsibility on the individual. I'm accountable, not you, not the economy, not a publisher or an editor, me. I'm totally accountable.

Susan Friedmann: Extremely powerful, and pleased I pushed you, because those 3 questions are dynamite. Absolute dynamite, so thank you. What's the best way for our listeners to get ahold of you and find out more, and maybe even use your services?

Jeff Blackman: Well, gosh, how nice. One of the things is, first, let me make something available to folks that will help them, if they'd like to get the Results Report, and since they are focused, like me, on the words that they use. I think it was Joseph Conrad who years ago said, "If you give me the right word and correct accent in which to speak it, I can move the world." Let's see if you and I together can help folks move their world. Here's the game plan. If folks send an email to jeff@jeffblackman.com... I'll give you that once again, jeff@jeffblackman.com, jeff@jeffblackman.com, if they put in the subject line, Susan, simply 2 words, "Susan rocks," that's it, "Susan rocks-"

Susan Friedmann: Yay.

Jeff Blackman: I'll know what that means. What that means is a couple of things. One, we will send them a list of 189 words and power phrases that they can use in whatever they choose to write. In addition to that, we will also send them a link to The Results Report Archives, so they can see The Results Report,

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which I have now written since 2000. That's what, 16, 17 years, and that also means that we'll add them to what we call our virtual family. When the next issue comes out, they will get that on a regular basis. Subject line, "Susan rocks," jeff@jeffblackman.com. We'll send them 189 words and power phrases, a link to The Results Report, and we'll get future issues.

Susan Friedmann: I'm the first one who's signing up. Any words that I can use, I love power words, emotion words. I love those lists. I collect them. Thank you, and Jeff, if you could leave our listeners with a golden nugget of information, what would that be?

Jeff Blackman: It's a reiteration of a message that I've shared before, and plain and simple, take action. As I mentioned earlier, be a doer, not a sayer. Focus not on intent. Focus on results. Words like 'try' are interesting, but they don't get you any closer to your destination. Define what is your destination, because then the journey becomes incredibly rewarding, not just for you, but for others, because you're making a difference in their lives. When you do that for others, then the residual benefit is you, too, get to make a difference in your life.

Susan Friedmann: That takes us back even to the fact of your focus and that discipline, because if you define that destination, I think that'll help make the focus and discipline so much easier. Would you agree?

Jeff Blackman: Absolutely true. All those things work together. People always want, Susan, the silver bullet, or if you will, yes, to some extent, the golden nugget, but there's never one thing. It is always a combination of things. It's never one thing that catapults someone to success. That concept of an overnight success, I don't know what that means because I was not an overnight success. You and I have discussed this topic before. Whatever success I've been blessed with [inaudible 00:26:43] in this business is because I did a lot of little things over a long period of time that led to eventual success. We do not have time in this podcast to discuss all the things that I've attempted that didn't work, but it's through those mistakes or those failures that I learned the lessons, and I've been surrounded by people who can also be brutally honest with me. They'll say something like "JB," that's what friends will call me, "JB, are you nuts? That's stupid." By the way, that is a question that I post to my clients. That is, "How do you want me to communicate with you, client? Do you want me to be honest, or diplomatic?" They always say, "Be honest."

I never use those words, because I always am. When you're always honest, you never have to say, "Let me be honest, I will be honest, let me be frank, I'm going to be candid," you never have to say that. Be brutally honest with

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yourself, and be willing to, yes, be bruised on occasion. When people who you really respect give you advice, listen to it. Don't be offended by it.

Susan Friedmann: Thank you so much for being so gracious and sharing your wisdom and expertise. Thank you all for taking time out of your precious 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.