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BOOK MARKETING: How to Position Yourself as a Highly Paid Expert Interview with Debbie Allen

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 is known as the expert of experts. Debbie Allen is an international business and brand strategist, best selling author of 8 books, and a mentor to business owners and entrepreneurs from around the world. Debbie possesses the unique ability to instantly solve any business problem, and leverage solutions as well as marketing trends that earn you online domination around your brand. With over 4 decades of business building wisdom she easily understands the dynamics of making big money by positioning yourself as an expert in your niche market. She's a National Speaker Association Colleague.

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

Debbie Allen: Susan, my pleasure. Anything about marketing and books I love. That's my expertise and I'm excited to be here. It is all about marketing so we're going to talk about as much as we can in this short time together, and give you as many tips as I can.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent. That's perfect. I knew you'd be a great guest because of exactly that and your expertise. Now, you've positioned yourself as a go to expert using your special expert positioning formula, but before we delve into some key ingredients of that special formula I'd love for you to share why being an expert in a niche market is just so important.

Debbie Allen: Oh, it sets the tone for everything you do. It's building the business and brand foundation. It's like building a house and if you forget to put the walls in right, then things are going to fly through the cracks. In business it's like the opportunities are falling through. You've got to have the foundation where people say, "That's what you own. That's what you're all about." A lot of times what I find with people that are experts, or consider

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themselves experts, is they start out there. They want to get speaking engagements, or they want to write their book, and they kind of just jump into it. They say, "I'm a sales and marketing expert. I'm a leadership expert. I'm what?" Right? You got to define it. You've got a niche within a niche.

A lot of times authors will write a book because, "I got to get that book out. It's in my head and I've got to get it out." A lot of times I think they put the cart before the horse, or the book before the horse kind of a thing where they don't have a marketing plan. They don't have the foundation right. They write the book and a lot of times that happens. People come to work with me and they've written this book which might be this fabulous book, but they don't have the foundation right so they haven't built a strong database list to market it to and the book is not being used to get people to the next step.

Everything I teach in the expert positioning formula must have a call to action to the next step. It definitely goes with the book. It's like, once they read your book that's great, but what is the next thing you want them to do? Go sign up for a webinar? Go to an event? Buy a product? Got to lead people to that. Every time I've written a book it leads to people working with me in some way. An example of that, my Highly Paid Expert book, was written when I came up with the concept the Highly Paid Expert was going to be a workshop, it was going to be a book, it was going to be a mentoring program. It was going to be all of these things. One thing leads to the next. The book has a lot of meat giving you a step by step, but it also has a lot of case studies in it giving people examples of how they can do it as well. Of course there's a seeding throughout the book and a call to action at the end. What's the next step?

You got to be thinking about why did you write the book? How can you continue to support people.

Susan Friedmann: Do you believe that anyone can position themselves as an expert, and if so, how long does that process take.

Debbie Allen: Yes, I believe anybody can position themselves an expert. I'm going to give you a case study example of this for some like, "No idea what I want to do." Got quite a few of those. Here's my story of Contessa. Contessa at 17 years old had 3 children already. She had to drop out of school to take care of her children. She was in an abusive relationship. She had to go on welfare and raise her children. Welfare, which I didn't really realize, that actually helps you get your GED and she got her GED and she became a nurse. Now she has for the last 25 years been a nurse. She now makes well over 6 figures as a nurse. She's reached all these hurdles right? Now she's going to the next

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chapter in her life. "I want to be an author. I want to be a speaker. I want to be a coach, but I don't really know exactly how I do that."

Well, based on her skill sets. I mean where I positioned her with a brand new business. Brand new business, from idea, to business, to brand, was a first call. It's like, "What are you good at? Where do you want to be?" We figure out what kind of business she wants. Then we came up with something like Life Mastery. I can't think of the title of her business right off the top of my head, but it's about life mastery. She's going to have a coaching program around speaking. She's a naturally gifted speaker, just amazing really. She had these life skills. Talk about anybody had every hurdle in front of her. That's when you usually want to write a book and tell my story. But again, she developed a business to tell her story and support people.

One of the pieces that we start with the book is basically, write a guidebook. Can you write 12 pages and make it a guidebook where people come in and get that on your website for free? I mean sometimes people have to start at the basic root of that. Whether you have people who have already written the book or they're at that ground level. We start with that, build the brand foundation which is your logo, your email signature, your business card, your website banner, your social media banners, all of that. That's one of the things that I do for clients. That takes about 3 weeks to do, to build out all the brand pieces from idea to done.

The next step in the process is you're going to build your website, or rebuild the website so you revamp it so that you're going to get more clients. That could take another month to 2 months. Usually about a 3 month period of time you have your brand foundation and website built or rebuilt and you're at the foundation level. Some of your people that are coming in here, they have a book. Maybe they threw up a 1 page website just to promote the book, and that's okay because the book can be its own website but I also usually, like when I worked with Contessa for example, the name of her business is Inspirational Life Mastery. We went and got inspirationallifemastery.com, and we started out with the brand. Then we grabbed up a bunch of domains, one of them being inspirationallifemasterybook.com, because that was one of our goals, to write the book. inspirationallifemasterycoach.com. We got that as well because she's going to be a coach. Whether your branding or re-branding you've got to go back to that.

It's funny Susan, [inaudible 00:08:56] the 8th book I wrote was actually co-authored with a couple. They're men from Australia. Insider Secrets of International Speaking. When they asked me to be involved in it I said,

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"Well, yeah sure." They had done all the thing. They got the major publisher for it. I just sent in articles, and wrote some stories, and I was in the book. I was shocked when I asked them. I said, "You got the domain right?" They're like, "Oh, no we didn't get that." They're from Australia. They probably got the .au. I don't even think they got that. I was like, "The first thing you do is you get the domain. You lock it all in." In the book, like Contessa's for example, that's one piece of all of her business.

If everything is consistent with the brand then everything will work for you. Sometimes I'll have to go back and re-title, and re-brand a book that's done and re-work it for somebody because, I don't do the book myself, but I get the brand concept so it's all consistent. If you have a title of a book that's completely different from what your brand is, it's kind of a disjointed message.

Susan Friedmann: Let's focus on some of these secret source of your expert positioning formula. What are some simple tips and techniques our listeners could easily implement?

Debbie Allen: Basically it goes down from the very first thing, is asking yourself the right questions as far as how you are positioned already, and then doing some research on what's out there. Let me give another example. I have a client who has been doing pedicures and manicures for 30 years. Oh my gosh. The most she makes is \$80 an hour. She said, "I've been coaching people, giving them free coaching, for years. I just give it away. That's what made my business so successful but now I realize I just kind of put myself in a box. I can't do this the rest of my life."

We had to create a coaching program around there. Did the same thing. Grabbing the right domains, what is it you have a skill set on, what can you do? She's like, "I want to empower women." Okay, there's a lot of people who want to empower women. Let's do a search on that. Let's put in empowered women on a Google search. Well, let's see what comes up. Now let's play with these words. Let's see where we can get the right domain. Let's see how we can differentiate ourselves from everybody else.

Same thing with a book. One of the first things I do when I'm looking for a brand is I'll go to Amazon and see what books are out there. I actually was looking for a book to research for an event that I have coming up. Big vision crews. I'm like, "Okay," getting ideas of what other people are speaking on big vision and what was out there, and I started looking for that. Then I started buying books on Amazon to do the research on it. Same thing with my clients. I'll look right away and say, "There's no book on that title. Let's grab that for the future. That's not where you're going to start probably."

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The thing is, most the people that want to start a business that are authors are usually speakers. What percentage of authors that you have that follow you on your podcast, Susan, do you think are also speakers?

Susan Friedmann: It's growing, but very few of them actually.

Debbie Allen: Really? So they're new authors? They wrote the book first?

Susan Friedmann: Correct. Actually the idea of speaking sometimes really scares the heebie-jeebies out of them.

Debbie Allen: Well, they'll have to speak because for an expert you need to speak. Now, do you have to be a platform? Do you have to do your own event? Do you have to be on a platform? No, but you need to do webinars to help sell the book and get the word out as your expertise. As you know, Susan, there are not a lot of people that get rich just writing a book, but the book is a positioning, a powerful positioning tool, that builds credibility as an expert. You got to have a plan in mind. That's one of the first steps in the formula. Where do you want to be 1 year from now? Maybe it's doing webinars. Maybe it's creating a virtual summit where you're interviewing other people around your topic that pushed the book. As you build those joint venture partners maybe they're also pushing the book to a best seller Amazon campaign.

What is your ultimate goal? If you don't know where you want to be 1 year from now you might not get there. You might have wrote the book because you're passionate and you wanted to get the message out, but I think you rip yourself off, and also your readers, if you don't give them that next opportunity of something. A coaching, an event, or a something. The next thing. Buy another product. If you're going to write a book, and especially if it's a business or personal development book, why wouldn't you put together a workbook with it? A workbook, filling in the blanks, or maybe do an audio program that goes with it. Instead of them buying a \$20 book, they're buying the whole product, the whole program that goes deeper into the content that you're offering.

Susan Friedmann: Yes, that's brilliant. I'm a great believer in that, re-purposing your material as well. Many of the things that you talk about are naturals as you say. Why wouldn't you write a workbook, or do an audio program, or a simple course to go along with it? As someone grows their expertise I understand that there are different levels that you discuss in your book *The Highly Paid Expert Pyramid*. By the way I just bought that. Would you share some of those levels with us and explain how does one move up that pyramid to the top?

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Debbie Allen:

That's really great because it kind of gives you an idea of where you're at and where your competition is. Again, if you did the book, hopefully you'll position yourself effectively with the book as an expert, and if not people aren't going to be looking for you. Let's just look at the pyramid.

I would ask that everybody that's listening draw a pyramid on a piece of paper. Then we're going to break it into different sections. Put like 5 sections in there. The first section on the bottom, which is the widest part of the pyramid, is where we're going to put a novice. A novice, you're the newbie. I wrote the book. I don't know anything about coaching. I don't really do a lot of speaking. I don't really know much about marketing. I just wrote the book. I always think it kind of cracks me up a little bit that people will write a book and then not have a marketing plan. I always say, "Sell it before you create it." Like a webinar. I'll do a webinar and then once I sell it I'll create all the modules to go with the product. Why do all the work if you didn't have to right? Besides, you're leaving a legacy for you and 5 other people to buy the book.

We want to create a marketing plan from the very beginning. Once you're starting to launch the idea of the book. That's why I always ask, "Where do you want to be 1 year from now?" The first part, the bottom part of the pyramid is the novice. It's kind of a scary place to be because you see the wide part also means that there's a lot of competition. When there's a lot of competition it means you make less money. You got to keep putting yourself out there over and over and over, selling it. You don't want to sell a book one person at a time. You want to sell it and it sells to the next level, or sell the book in bulk for a certain group.

The next part is skilled. Maybe you're an expert then. The next level in the pyramid is skilled. Competition starts getting a little smaller. People start seeing what your skill set is. Maybe they're paying you more money, giving you more opportunities to come out there because you position yourself as that go to expert in your niche market. The next level is the specialist. Now people see you as that go to person. "Oh, okay. You're the one that wrote the book." Now you need to be an expert if you wrote a book right? You're the specialist that wrote that book. Again, all you're doing is creating multiple streams of income around the concept of the book.

Above that you're an authority. Now we're known as the total go to authority. The pyramid is narrowing. You're making more money. A lot more opportunities are coming to you. You're not looking for them. You're not having to work really hard. I would say once you get your marketing in place it works for you. You don't have to sell. If you're an expert who is

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educating people through a book, through a podcast, through whatever it is you do, people will find you and opportunities come. We were just sitting next to each other at the National Speaker's Meeting at a luncheon or something, I don't remember where, and you said, "Hey, will you be on my podcast?" Well, of course I've known you for many years, known each other personally as friends. I know of you and respect your expertise. I know you've been around a long time so when you asked me that question I said yes right away. I don't say yes to very many people because I'm asked to do interviews all the time. I knew it was a fit for me, for you, and I respected your expertise already.

The top level of that pyramid is where we want to be right? The Highly Paid Expert. The authority, you're making more money, but the Highly Paid Expert, you're locked in. You're really making what I call a financially free lifestyle based on what your expertise is.

Susan Friedmann: Well, thank you first of all for recognizing that camaraderie and authority expertise that we both have. I really respect everything that you do in the marketplace and, as you say, you're the expert of experts and I believe in being the experts. This is a good fit Debbie.

Debbie Allen: We didn't have to get to know each other. We respected each other in the organization, know of each other because of how we're positioned. That's the power of that Susan. There's hundreds of people in that organization that know of me that I don't know of, that I don't know, but they know how I positioned it. Again, if I'm going to say yes, and the same to you, is you only have so much time and you want that fit to be right. Again, I returned the favor in saying I'm honored to be on your podcast and that you asked as well.

Susan Friedmann: Well, thank you. Let's look at some common mistakes that authors make when they want to position themselves as an expert. What do you run into?

Debbie Allen: You've got to have a plan of where you want to be, or it's too general of a niche market. Like I said, an example of that is the leadership. I have probably a dozen clients I'm working with right now who are experts in leadership. It's a massive market let me tell you. Just try to brand yourself in that. What is the thing in leadership that you do that's unique? What is the thing that makes it innovative the way you teach it? You've really got to define, go deeper. I think the majority of people and authors don't position themselves deep enough, or they don't reinvent. That happens.

For me, I've reinvented so many times. I had a book. My first best seller

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was Confessions of Shameless Self Promoters. I've been a member of National Speakers for 21 years. A lot of people knew me as different things in this business. When I started I was a retail expert. For the first 10, 12 years of my speaking career I was speaking strictly in retail. Then I went to associations. I wrote books on retail. Then I went to a mortgage and real estate market. Then I wrote a book called Skyrocketing Sales that a publisher found me and said, "Will you write a book on sales?" I made a big mistake because I'm a marketing expert. I should never have wrote a book on sales. Did it get me more speaking engagements? Yes, but it liquefied my brand and it was never one of my best sellers. I've still got copies to sell. It's a great book but it's not what I'm promoting because I'm known as something else.

Then the Confessions of Shameless Self Promoters came about teaching people how to market themselves, position themselves. That just hit so strongly. My keynotes went to the highest level ever as a paid speaker. That's about the level when I reached the CSP and my highest speaking fee. I was in a box. I had the great book and I had the keynote, but I couldn't do any more than that. I couldn't mentor people on that. I was just speaking, selling books, that was it. Made a lot of money with that then the economy crashed and it was like, "What am I going to do now?" I reinvented again. I actually went international for about 3 years because of that. That's where the money was. I just went internationally because the business wasn't here.

Then positioned myself again. The Highly Paid Expert. Now that brand is only 4 years old. It was the hardest thing to do, Susan, was reinvent my brand when it was so successful. People just, "Hey, Shameless." That was my name right? It was so successful that it was almost hard to move away from that brand and create something new, but it was critical because I was stuck. I couldn't do anymore from what I was doing there.

Susan Friedmann: It's interesting that you say that because you and I have got a very similar history that way because I've reinvented myself many times over, but my big claim to fame has always been as the trade show coach. Well, I got to a point where, like you, I couldn't go any further with what I was doing and it didn't excite me in the same way that it used to. I reinvented myself, and now working with authors, and being an author marketer, helping them with that and that to me gives me so much more satisfaction. I enjoy it. It's just a whole new me now and I get excited about it so I'm with you all the way on that.

Debbie Allen: Well, I think Susan, you have people at different levels. You got the new people that are looking and maybe they're at a novice level and they say,

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"Hey, I get it that I need a brand. I need to get that right first. I need to learn a little bit more about marketing for sure." That's everything. The other people that are at a higher level that are listening, they're going, "Okay, maybe I'm at that reinvention part now. Where do I go with that and how do I do it?" I think that you haven't quite really found your thing. I think that everything I've done up to this point in my life, in my speaking career, had to get me to my destiny. It is now. I will do Highly Paid Expert for the rest of my life. I'll write other books, and I'll do other things, but it'll all be based around that. I mean, this is my legacy. This is the thing that's really changing businesses.

I had to do all those things just like you had to do the trade show coach and all the things. You had to get these skill sets, and these different levels where you got this thing that it just feels like it's you. It's like the best that you can be.

Susan Friedmann: Very much so. One of the areas, and I love the fact that you say niche instead of niche because my book though is *Riches in Niches: How to Make it Big in Small Markets*. Sometimes I vacillate between the 2 but saying the word niche feels so much better than niche. Any event. One of the things that I come across when I talk to people about niche marketing is the fact that they get concerned about narrowing themselves too much, and thinking that they need to stay as a generalist rather than a specialist. Would you address that?

Debbie Allen: I will address that strongly. Thank you for that question because I am very very strongly agree that you must niche market. The more general you are, the more you're going to be at the bottom of that pyramid. If anybody tells you that they're wrong. I've been an entrepreneur since I was 19 years old, building and selling million dollar companies. Right? Everything was niche, and special, and that's when you made it. The more I generalized in anything, the less successful I was. You've got to find it. Maybe you got to dig in there or work with somebody that gets you to that point. That's usually when people will come to me. "I'm lost. I've got all these skills. I know it, but I can't figure it out. Why?" Well, you're so close to it.

You're so close to it that you don't see what other people see, these prospects that could be paying you a lot more money. You don't see it because of that. The other part is that you can be there, and you can explain it to me, and I will get it, and I will see what is special within this special of a niche with you that will make you different and define you out of that general. I call that, when you're in the general market, it's swimming in the sea of sameness. It's a very very scary place to be. Let me tell you. This happens. Susan you'll appreciate this just being a member of

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NSA right? It's a supportive group. Everybody supports each other right?

Susan Friedmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Debbie Allen: In 21 years, I have been on the toughest stages where Pitch Fest. I've been all weekend long sitting, being the last speaker on stage. I happened to make sales at the end. I've done every part of this business you can imagine. I've been on stage with all men. I'm the only woman. Multiple speakers all pitching, closing. Toughest platforms you could be on and I will still never say that in all those years I've had somebody throw me under the bus like another speaker follow up. Everybody supports each other when they're on stage. Very seldom will you get somebody that's so competitive in some way that they would do this. Well, it happened to me last month.

I was on the stage and this person, the host, actually brought this other speaker on to speak after he booked me. I'm their main speaker. I'm like, "Why would you do that?" He goes, "Well, this person is my mentor and they said they're going to be in the area and I couldn't say no to them." I said, "Well make sure their topic's different because I'm not really keen on that. I wish you would have ran that across me." They're like, "Oh, I think it's going to be fine." We hung out for the day before and got to know this person because I believe that you can work with your competitors. I believe that I get some of the best business from my competitors because you always have a different way of doing it. You either choose to say, "I'm going to look at you as a competitor or look at you as a joint venture partner."

This person looked at me as a competitor. I felt the energy, but I was like, "Hey I'm getting this vibe. I don't know what this is." I get up there, and I do my thing, and I knock it out of the park, and I get all this interest. This person goes up after me to speak and they totally threw me under the bus. One of the things I said was this point Susan. You must niche market. You must pick a path and find your market. Let some people go. Say yes to the right things and no to the wrong things. Go after 20%, the top 20%, of your market. You can't be everything. People start new. This is what they do. They want to be the generalist. "I don't want to say no. I want money. I want to grab every opportunity. I want every bit of money I can get. I can't say no to a client." That is one of the biggest mistakes you make. You get less confident and you make less money doing that.

I'm so adamant about that. I say this in my presentation. The next speaker goes up and says, "You don't need to niche market. You can be out there as a generalist. You can get this kind of client and this kind of client." I'm like, I was livid because not only was I livid that she threw me under the bus, I was more livid for what she did to the audience. That's the part that was

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killing me because this poor audience was sitting there and the people that were new were going, "I'm confused." Then other people, it gave them permission to stay general. When they opened up a panel, an open discussion at the end of the day after the presentations, I'm sitting there encouraging. I'm like, boiling inside. What did you learn most out of today. First person raises their hand. "Well, I'm really confused because I'm overwhelmed with the information because I learned some different things and I'm not really sure."

They heard it. Nobody needs to know. They heard, "Wait. Somebody just said this and then they said this." The next person raised their hand. "The thing I learned most from today is I don't need to, I can still be my general market. I can market to this person and this person and this person." She had 3 completely different niche markets. I just wanted to scream because, that's what I'm saying. I'm so glad you asked that question because if I can say anything today this is going to be the golden nugget. I'm giving it to you now before the end of it. You must niche market. You cannot be everything to everyone or you will not be truly successful.

Susan Friedmann: That is so wise. I'm so sorry that that happened to you because I could feel that confusion as you were telling the story. I'm like, "Oh my goodness. These people are going to be vacillating." Yes I can. No I can't. Yes I can. No I can't.

Debbie Allen: Well, yeah. Give me permission to keep doing the same thing versus let me work a little harder on getting it right.

Susan Friedmann: Exactly.

Debbie Allen: That just brought that person failure. I mean, it wasn't me feeling sorry for me. It was feeling sorry for the audience. I felt so bad for the audience because I felt like, "Hmm." But the few people that did get it ended up being very good clients of mine. In fact, one of them signed up as being a VIP client of mine. The people that did get it get it. I was sorry for the people that didn't. That's why that was such a good question you asked me. If you're even wavering on this, do not waver.

Susan Friedmann: I'm supporting you every inch of the way because I know what that's like. If people want to get hold of you Debbie, how can they do that?

Debbie Allen: They can go to my website debbieallen.com. From there they can sign up for my free mini book, which is the Highly Paid Expert the mini version of that. That'll give them lots of tips. One of the cool things in that, it gives them the multiple streams of income. I want your audience to be thinking

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more than a book. What are other streams of income this book can create for me? That's the marketing tool for it. That's the one thing they can go to. I would say start there. That's a great place.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent. Then I know you left us with a golden nugget. Is there another one that we can squeeze out of you?

Debbie Allen: Okay, so what is the number 1 problem that you see that your listeners always hear as far as marketing?

Susan Friedmann: That they're scared to do it. They don't feel they have the expertise to market or sell, and also they don't have the time.

Debbie Allen: Time and money are the 2 biggest excuses everybody has. If your family is depending on it you'll find the time and you'll find the money. Now, your business depends on it, which means your family depends on it with your income or your financial freedom. Forget those 2 excuses. You'll have both. They come to you because of that. Then we're going to go deeper into learning the marketing for the books and getting it out there. They go to you. If they want to build their brand they go to me. You have to find the people that will help you get this done. Why would you want to try and figure it out on your own? Why would you be frustrated trying to do it on your own? It's a business. A book is a business, and if you think about it that way you'll go out and you'll find the people.

I hired so many mentors when I wrote a book. I go all the way back from childhood when I was in high school. I was a terrible student. My English teacher said, "If you don't pass this next test you're going to flunk high school." Well, do you think that I'd be, in my mind, think that I would be a good author? I started interviewing people because I didn't think I could write a book because of that. Now, 8 books later. If you're not a good marketing person you need to find help. I've hired so many marketing mentors that have taught me so much and moved my business dramatically. Here's the golden nugget. Thinking as a solo entrepreneur, a solo author, if you're going to learn to do it by yourself forget it. You're going to stay small. You must find the right mentors for you at the right time, and be a sponge to learn.

All you need to do with the guidance, with the right people that will hold you by the hand and sometimes believe in you more than you believe in yourself, and implement, implement, implement.

Susan Friedmann: Thank you for sharing that wisdom with us. Thank you all for taking time out of your precious day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it

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sparks some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.