

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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## BOOK MARKETING: How to Be a Media Interview Darling Interview with Bernadette Duncan

- Susan: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast where you learn improvement 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 is a radio talk show expert. Bernadette Duncan spent twenty-six years as a radio talk show producer. In her newly released book, "Yappy Days: Behind the Scenes with Newsmen, Schmoozers, Boozers, and Losers", she vividly recounts her adventures in the trenches of big time talk radio during its most important, dynamic decades. Bernadette writes interesting details about hundreds of names from the high profile hosts for whom she works, such as Larry King, Sally Jessy Raphael, Lou Dobbs, Charles Osgood, and Tom Snyder, to the non-stop parade of famous celebrity and news maker guests she booked, and in many cases, babysat along the way. During her career in radio she worked for such companies as ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox and many more. Also a professional writer, her articles have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, New York Daily News, Cosmopolitan and Seventeen. It's my distinct pleasure to welcome you, Bernadette, to the show, and thank you for being this weeks special guest expert and mentor.
- Bernadette: Thank you, Susan. Thank you for inviting me. Pleasure.
- Susan: First of all, congratulations on your new book, "Yappy Days". Wow, that's such a feat. It's like giving birth to a child.
- Bernadette: I suppose so. It certainly is a lot different than working behind the scenes in a control room, that's for sure.
- Susan: In your book you've got so many stories, and I would love you to just give us a quick favorite if you would, before we sort of delve into talking about radio talk shows.
- Bernadette: Sure, Susan. I would say that one of my earliest memories, and one of the reasons why I stayed in the business, was when I luckily got to work with Larry King really early in my career. I was twenty-four years old, I was the only overnight producer at NBC radio networks, and Larry was going to be in New York and made a deal with my bosses to come in and use our studios in New York, and I got to be the producer on his remote interviews. Meaning, I would meet him at the front door, bring him up, sit him in front of the microphone, give him coffee, you know, the kind of thing that really young producers starting out get to do.
- I'm two weeks in on the job, and among all the guests he had, the celebrities and the politicians, he had on an unusual guest, at least for him, and it was a

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woman writer who did a book on childhood sexual abuse. And I'm watching him on air squirming in his seat, and I'm realizing this man does not know what he's going to ask her. I could just tell. I'm glued to him, and I'm thinking at the same time, "Oh my goodness, my boss told me whatever I do", it went more like this, "Whatever you do, do not talk to him unless he speaks to you." And I'm watching him squirming and I decide in this quick moment, I'm going to talk into his earpiece. So I press the little button, I come up with a couple of questions because I had written for seventeen magazine, I read seventeen magazine, and this was the kind of stories that they covered all the time. So out from my mouth comes these questions, and a second later that very question came out of his mouth. It charged me, and I thought to myself, "Wow. If this is the kind of thing I get to do, it's live, then I'm in my right seat at that moment."

Susan: That gave me goosebumps just having you tell that story. It's so dramatic and yes, I mean it shows that even somebody famous like that, there are situations that maybe he or she can't handle. So yes, that's where a producer really shines, so good for you. Bernadette, many of our listeners are first time, primarily non-fiction authors, and they're really eager to get the word out about their books, and of course talk radio's an excellent medium for them to do this. What recommendations and maybe some practical tips could you offer to help them get started?

Bernadette: I would say that an author should think about news pegs. So whatever's going on in the news, if they could project where their book speaks to that. So right now we just came out of the elections and we now have president-elect Donald Trump. In pitching my book, I've been talking about, look at all the talk show hosts that Donald Trump is surrounding himself with, as well as him being a kind of celebrity TV talker, kind of a shock jock, and again, I'm speaking the language to this particular news. If I'm a radio producer and I'm getting a pitch letter, I want to know the solution because I'm constantly putting guests on the air, it's like a conveyor belt, and the author should show up with a solution.

Susan: So anything that's topical is a good way, as you said, to how can they take their subject and maybe massage it in such a way that it comes over as being, it fits into, as you say, what's going on in the news currently.

Bernadette: Precisely.

Susan: So as a talk show producer, what criteria do you use maybe to vet guests?

Bernadette: I spent a lot of time pre-interviewing them. I could give you maybe what was my toughest one, because it took a lot of, let's say, I want to say courage. This was after 9/11, we were putting on experts, but the problem was you see the same experts over and over again, right? I was willing to take a chance on a fellow who claimed to be a former terrorist, but the problem was he wasn't willing to give me his home phone number, to show up in studio, and he had reason, I just didn't know that yet. So I needed to pre-interview him. I wanted to test him out and just see, there was nothing on him, but I took a chance and I told the hosts, I was working with a number of hosts in that job, and I told them, "Look, at any time, I don't know this guy, but this is what I do know. And if you're willing to

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take a chance, so am I." Love it.

That would've been probably the scariest vetting job, but otherwise I'll always vet a guest as I did with Catherine Bell, the actress, when I found out that she had a scar on her neck that she never covered because she thought it looked cool. She was like this kind of secret motorcycle babe kind of character, and she was studying Scientology at the time. Now, Tom Snyder loved that detail. So it's always that I come up with questions and I was digging. Always good to dig.

Susan: When an author wants to get onto radio talk shows, are you the first stop? Should they look for a producer first, or what's the process?

Bernadette: I would say that there's no one answer. I would say, just realistically, it's like getting a job. There's no real one answer, though the producer is usually the gatekeeper. I would say that most producers are opening the mail for the host, but because I'm a producer I can tell you, we schmooze. So if you can tap into your inner schmooze, I have a chapter in this book about schmoozing and how important it is to develop that kind of personality, and just be able to converse with somebody and not necessarily be kind of a killer personality, but rather personable. Because kind or friendly or dropping off a card, developing a relationship even on Facebook with somebody is slow, but it might work to be a schmoozer.

Susan: So that begs the question, what is the best way to make the initial contact? Would it e-mail, would it be over the phone, would it be, as you mentioned, Facebook or even LinkedIn, or what did you prefer as the first contact?

Bernadette: I would stay away from telephone calls. I feel like though the answer is almost all the above, but today's culture and the office culture, phone calls don't go. It's funny you can go into an office today and you do not hear the phone's ringing because everybody is using e-mail. I think that's the way to go. What I've done in my job right now as an author is I do both. I send an e-mail and the book, and then follow up with an e-mail. So I might contact the person three times. It's a lot of leg work, but it's amazing what comes out of it. I would never make a phone call today. Isn't that funny?

Susan: That is funny. So if I wanted to stand out, let's say, and I came to you, what would attract you? Would it be the headline, what would I have to say to really grab your attention?

Bernadette: You know that subject line in the e-mail? I would develop something short. If it's five words, six words, and I would get right to the point in that subject line. Like "talk show topic" and then colon "blah blah blah blah". Whatever would be a great selling point for the author's book. But something, again, that offers solution. You want to offer solution to the producer who might in likely thinking about the news, depending on the show, right? So know the show. Know who you are addressing, because each show is different.

Susan: I think that's a really important point is, as you say, knowing the show because you don't want to talk about news maybe on a family show that is not interested in that particular topic. So knowing the show, that would be very important. How about some common mistakes that you see guests make, the

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**Bernadette:** I have had the luxury of finding out all on my own, the last thing a host would want is someone who gives a yes no answer. So the funny thing is is that here I am, a producer for almost thirty years, and I'll never forget the first night doing an interview with a very well known host, and I'm telling you Susan, my adrenaline, I couldn't sleep for days, I finally do it and all of a sudden I realize I'm doing all the things that a guest is not supposed to do, including do not give yes no answers. To have enough sound bites or story telling to deliver entertaining. So it's three take aways: know how to tell a story, make them laugh, if you can, relate it to he host in some manner.

**Susan:** Which begs the question, of course, you should know the host, like you said, know the show but also know the host and what appeals to them. You mentioned the words "sound bite". Let's talk about the importance of sound bites, first of all what a sound bite is, and then how best a guest can use sound bites.

**Bernadette:** First of all, what is a sound bite. It's generally seven to twenty seconds, twenty seconds being very long, but in some news programming you would use something that long. Ideally, it's things like, well, our recent president-elect Donald Trump's language. Build a wall, lock her up, I mean those are sound bites that the listeners could handle and hold on to and it became part of his language. We listeners to talk shows want to hear almost that kind of language. Almost as if it's like poetry. And taking "build a wall", "lock her up", any kinds of really clever, even from movies. Arnold Schwarzenegger's famous lines, if you can remember from some of his movie where "he's back", those sorts of things become real powerful. It sounds very powerful. If all you are is a voice, that's good stuff.

**Susan:** So what's a sound bite for you in your book?

**Bernadette:** I do like the blurb that the book has, and that's "behind the scenes with newsmen, schmoozers, boozers, and losers". And the funny thing is is that every host I have spoken with will laugh, often will mispronounce one of the words and then they will always ask me, "So, where do I fall? What kind of a host am I?" And I'm like, "What am I going to say? All of the above, maybe." But it's kind of a nice way, it's funny, and again you want to make the listener laugh as well.

**Susan:** Yeah, it really catches your attention. The words just flow, it's a great subtitle to the book, it really is. So congratulations on that. There are talk shows which have that call in element. What would happen, let's say, when a caller asks a question of the guest and it stymies you? What happens to me is my mind might even go blank as to what the answer should be. How would you recommend a guest handle that situation without feeling stupid?

**Bernadette:** I think it's great to have some answers in your back pocket. Things like, "Gee, that's beyond my pay grade." "I guess I don't know that, but maybe we can ask, hey maybe I can call up my sister in-law, or my husband, or you know." I would have a ready answer. I witnessed Sally Jessy Raphael answer questions that she

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didn't know the answer to in this way. We had a caller from Alaska saying, "Sally, what do I do with a dead horse on my front lawn?" And I knew she didn't know the answer, but she was such a rascal of a host that she probably spent the first five seconds just laughing, which was engaging anyway if I'm a listener, and then what she did was she turned it around and said, she asked the caller more questions, but then she opened the question up to listeners. But also, it gave us such a window into Alaska, a dead horse, what else is going on this neighborhood? It was just so much, again, fun, because radio should be entertaining. It shouldn't just be arguing and hate, and that was fun.

Susan: Oh, I can imagine that. Just going through my mind, what happened? How did the horse die?

Bernadette: Right, exactly. And then this poor woman, you know, what is she going to do? The caller then described about what it's like during, well, those six months out of the year when it's completely dark, and that when she sends her kids out to play they have those little, those mine hats with the flashlight attached to the little hat. So her kids are out in the backyard with this flashlight hat on, and it's just the imagery. It was such an opportunity to create that theater of the mind that radio provides.

Susan: How about thank you notes? I've often heard that sending the host and the producer a thank you note, what's your take on that?

Bernadette: I love what you just asked because it's so old fashioned, and it does make an impression. The guest who sent me a thank you note, and believe me, they were few and far between, was a fellow who went by the name Anonymous. He had written a book about Bin Laden, and this was back in, obviously, after 9/11, and he wrote me a thank you note, and I'll never forget that. I held onto it for a long time, and by the way, it made such an impression that I had him on like two more times after that because being nice has value. You never know what's going to go on on a radio show. When news breaks out, producers have to run in with a solution, and if I have to deal with a nasty guest, I knew that this fellow was a nice guy. If he was going to go to that trouble, you want people to come to realize that being a talk show producer is a conveyor belt of activity, and I'm good for my word, that's all we have in this business, and then for a guest to write a thank you note, well they're probably a nice person. That doesn't hurt. Doesn't hurt at all. And the holidays are coming, boy, maximize. Send cards.

Susan: What I liked what you said is that you had this person on again.

Bernadette: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Susan: And so that kept that person top of mind for you, and so I think that, as you said, it's a nice thing to do.

Bernadette: Yes, imagine that. It was nice.

Susan: So how does one become a resource? As you said earlier, you tend to get the same people over and over again who are the topic or the subject matter experts who you seem to go to because it's probably easy. How does one become one of those people?

Bernadette: I would suggest to anyone who wants to be a guest to know what you can

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- provide that's different than anybody else. What makes you unique. What can you do to help enlighten a certain topic. And everybody has areas. I was just speaking at a college, and some of these kids had some real quirky backgrounds. Video games, and documentary making and cartoons, you know, at this age. But I said you never know. I had a, like a famous video maker dies, and maybe that kid is going to be a great guest because they're going to know a lot more background than the next person. We all have our areas, and know it. Bring it.
- Susan: So let's talk about your book. Where can listeners get a hold of "Yappy Days"?
- Bernadette: "Yappy Days" is available on Amazon.com.
- Susan: And if people have any questions about getting on to talk show hosts, how could they contact you?
- Bernadette: I would be happy to welcome any questions, and folks can reach me through Facebook. It's Bernadette Duncan, I am on Facebook with that name, and I'd be happy to respond to questions.
- Susan: And if you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be, Bernadette?
- Bernadette: I liked your theme from earlier, and I can tell you that one of the biggest hosts I ever got to work with, Sally Jessy Raphael, definitely was a woman who took the time to write a note. I was a thirteen year old kid, I wrote her a fan letter never realizing that ten years later I'd be sitting in her studio. And you know what happened two weeks later? She wrote back. A little envelope showed up in my mailbox, and this woman whose voice was in my home while I was growing up took the time to write me a note and I still have it to this day.
- Susan: Oh, that gave me goosebumps just saying that. That was beautiful.
- Bernadette: She was a nice woman to take that time.
- Susan: Certainly. Thank you so much for being today's expert guest, and 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.
- Susan: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast where you learn improvement 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 is a radio talk show expert. Bernadette Duncan spent twenty-six years as a radio talk show producer. In her newly released book, "Yappy Days: Behind the Scenes with Newsers, Schmoozers, Boozers, and Losers", she vividly recounts her adventures in the trenches of big time talk radio during its most important, dynamic decades. Bernadette writes interesting details about hundreds of names from the high profile hosts for whom she works, such as Larry King, Sally Jessy Raphael, Lou Dobbs, Charles Osgood, and Tom Snyder, to the non-stop parade of famous celebrity and news maker guests she booked, and in many cases, babysat along the way. During her career in radio she worked for such companies as ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox and many more. Also a professional writer, her articles have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, New York Daily News, Cosmopolitan and Seventeen.

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- Susan: First of all, congratulations on your new book, "Yappy Days". Wow, that's such a feat. It's like giving birth to a child.
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- Susan: In your book you've got so many stories, and I would love you to just give us a quick favorite if you would, before we sort of delve into talking about radio talk shows.
- Bernadette: Sure, Susan. I would say that one of my earliest memories, and one of the reasons why I stayed in the business, was when I luckily got to work with Larry King really early in my career. I was twenty-four years old, I was the only overnight producer at NBC radio networks, and Larry was going to be in New York and made a deal with my bosses to come in and use our studios in New York, and I got to be the producer on his remote interviews. Meaning, I would meet him at the front door, bring him up, sit him in front of the microphone, give him coffee, you know, the kind of thing that really young producers starting out get to do.
- I'm two weeks in on the job, and among all the guests he had, the celebrities and the politicians, he had on an unusual guest, at least for him, and it was a woman writer who did a book on childhood sexual abuse. And I'm watching him on air squirming in his seat, and I'm realizing this man does not know what he's going to ask her. I could just tell. I'm glued to him, and I'm thinking at the same time, "Oh my goodness, my boss told me whatever I do", it went more like this, "Whatever you do, do not talk to him unless he speaks to you." And I'm watching him squirming and I decide in this quick moment, I'm going to talk into his earpiece. So I press the little button, I come up with a couple of questions because I had written for seventeen magazine, I read seventeen magazine, and this was the kind of stories that they covered all the time. So out from my mouth comes these questions, and a second later that very question came out of his mouth. It charged me, and I thought to myself, "Wow. If this is the kind of thing I get to do, it's live, then I'm in my right seat at that moment."
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- Bernadette: Precisely.
- Susan: So as a talk show producer, what criteria do you use maybe to vet guests?
- Bernadette: I spent a lot of time pre-interviewing them. I could give you maybe what was my toughest one, because it took a lot of, let's say, I want to say courage. This was after 9/11, we were putting on experts, but the problem was you see the same experts over and over again, right? I was willing to take a chance on a fellow who claimed to be a former terrorist, but the problem was he wasn't willing to give me his home phone number, to show up in studio, and he had reason, I just didn't know that yet. So I needed to pre-interview him. I wanted to test him out and just see, there was nothing on him, but I took a chance and I told the hosts, I was working with a number of hosts in that job, and I told them, "Look, at any time, I don't know this guy, but this is what I do know. And if you're willing to take a chance, so am I." Love it.
- That would've been probably the scariest vetting job, but otherwise I'll always vet a guest as I did with Catherine Bell, the actress, when I found out that she had a scar on her neck that she never covered because she thought it looked cool. She was like this kind of secret motorcycle babe kind of character, and she was studying Scientology at the time. Now, Tom Snyder loved that detail. So it's always that I come up with questions and I was digging. Always good to dig.
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all the above, but today's culture and the office culture, phone calls don't go. It's funny you can go into an office today and you do not hear the phone's ringing because everybody is using e-mail. I think that's the way to go. What I've done in my job right now as an author is I do both. I send an e-mail and the book, and then follow up with an e-mail. So I might contact the person three times. It's a lot of leg work, but it's amazing what comes out of it. I would never make a phone call today. Isn't that funny?

Susan: That is funny. So if I wanted to stand out, let's say, and I came to you, what would attract you? Would it be the headline, what would I have to say to really grab your attention?

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Bernadette: I think it's great to have some answers in your back pocket. Things like, "Gee, that's beyond my pay grade." "I guess I don't know that, but maybe we can ask, hey maybe I can call up my sister in-law, or my husband, or you know." I would have a ready answer. I witnessed Sally Jessy Raphael answer questions that she didn't know the answer to in this way. We had a caller from Alaska saying, "Sally, what do I do with a dead horse on my front lawn?" And I knew she didn't know the answer, but she was such a rascal of a host that she probably spent the first five seconds just laughing, which was engaging anyway if I'm a listener, and then what she did was she turned it around and said, she asked the caller more questions, but then she opened the question up to listeners. But also, it gave us such a window into Alaska, a dead horse, what else is going on this neighborhood? It was just so much, again, fun, because radio should be entertaining. It shouldn't just be arguing and hate, and that was fun.

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play they have those little, those mine hats with the flashlight attached to the little hat. So her kids are out in the backyard with this flashlight hat on, and it's just the imagery. It was such an opportunity to create that theater of the mind that radio provides.

Susan: How about thank you notes? I've often heard that sending the host and the producer a thank you note, what's your take on that?

Bernadette: I love what you just asked because it's so old fashioned, and it does make an impression. The guest who sent me a thank you note, and believe me, they were few and far between, was a fellow who went by the name Anonymous. He had written a book about Bin Laden, and this was back in, obviously, after 9/11, and he wrote me a thank you note, and I'll never forget that. I held onto it for a long time, and by the way, it made such an impression that I had him on like two more times after that because being nice has value. You never know what's going to go on on a radio show. When news breaks out, producers have to run in with a solution, and if I have to deal with a nasty guest, I knew that this fellow was a nice guy. If he was going to go to that trouble, you want people to come to realize that being a talk show producer is a conveyor belt of activity, and I'm good for my word, that's all we have in this business, and then for a guest to write a thank you note, well they're probably a nice person. That doesn't hurt. Doesn't hurt at all. And the holidays are coming, boy, maximize. Send cards.

Susan: What I liked what you said is that you had this person on again.

Bernadette: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Susan: And so that kept that person top of mind for you, and so I think that, as you said, it's a nice thing to do.

Bernadette: Yes, imagine that. It was nice.

Susan: So how does one become a resource? As you said earlier, you tend to get the same people over and over again who are the topic or the subject matter experts who you seem to go to because it's probably easy. How does one become one of those people?

Bernadette: I would suggest to anyone who wants to be a guest to know what you can provide that's different than anybody else. What makes you unique. What can you do to help enlighten a certain topic. And everybody has areas. I was just speaking at a college, and some of these kids had some real quirky backgrounds. Video games, and documentary making and cartoons, you know, at this age. But I said you never know. I had a, like a famous video maker dies, and maybe that

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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kid is going to be a great guest because they're going to know a lot more background than the next person. We all have our areas, and know it. Bring it.

Susan: So let's talk about your book. Where can listeners get a hold of "Yappy Days"?

Bernadette: "Yappy Days" is available on Amazon.com.

Susan: And if people have any questions about getting on to talk show hosts, how could they contact you?

Bernadette: I would be happy to welcome any questions, and folks can reach me through Facebook. It's Bernadette Duncan, I am on Facebook with that name, and I'd be happy to respond to questions.

Susan: And if you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be, Bernadette?

Bernadette: I liked your theme from earlier, and I can tell you that one of the biggest hosts I ever got to work with, Sally Jessy Raphael, definitely was a woman who took the time to write a note. I was a thirteen year old kid, I wrote her a fan letter never realizing that ten years later I'd be sitting in her studio. And you know what happened two weeks later? She wrote back. A little envelope showed up in my mailbox, and this woman whose voice was in my home while I was growing up took the time to write me a note and I still have it to this day.

Susan: Oh, that gave me goosebumps just saying that. That was beautiful.

Bernadette: She was a nice woman to take that time.

Susan: Certainly. Thank you so much for being today's expert guest, and 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