

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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## BOOK MARKETING: How to Be a Go-To Expert Using Powerful Branding

- 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 is Dr. John Tantillo, a branding and marketing expert who is better known as the Marketing Doctor. He is the branding editor for Fridge Magazine, the publication for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Over the years, Dr. T has become a personal branding professional who uses his doctoral skills in psychology and marketing to assist others to go brand yourself. He's the author of *People Buy Brands Not Companies*, and the only Udemy courses *Go Brand Yourself: The Secrets of Branding For Success*. He's published extensively in major news outlets and has appeared nationally and internationally on TV and radio programs, so Dr. T, thank you for being this week's special guest expert and mentor.
- John Tantillo: Oh, Susan. Thank you for that wonderful introduction. I wish I could wake up to that every morning and my day would be just simply marvelous just for you.
- Susan Friedmann: Thank you. We could record it and you could use it.
- John Tantillo: Yes, I didn't think of that. That's right. Well, that's why you're the host.
- Susan Friedmann: Let's first understand what is branding, and how it will help our authors build their marketing platform.
- John Tantillo: I find that a lot of people just think brands are simply names, and if you take it to that point, you're going to miss two other components. Yes, brand is a name, but it's also what I would like to add to that an adjective of what comes to mind once I mention the name. And what authors have to be aware of, that after they write the book, then the hard stuff comes about. You thought it was writing the book? Mm-mm (negative). The hard stuff is the promotion, or how to get people to know the brand. So there's the name, what comes to mind when I

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mention the name, and then how do I promote my brand or name so that people will in fact buy my book or respond to my book.

The secret there, I say this very emphatically, is that it's not about you. Put that artist moniker behind you. You have to think like a marketer and think about what is it that my target market or my customers are going to respond to? You can have a good idea, but it might be manipulating it just a little, little bit so that they will respond more positively. If you're a novelist, one ending might be what is more creatively the correct way, but just maybe an alternative ending that will get more people to read the book might be the way to go. That's very, very important and it's often overlooked that it's not about us, it's all about our customer.

Susan Friedmann: And I couldn't agree with you more, and thank you for really emphasizing the fact that the marketing of the book and branding is just so critical, and even harder as you say ... I don't want to scare our listeners, but writing the book was the easy part. Now getting it into the hands of the reader, that's what takes some real art and science and branding.

John Tantillo: You know, Susan, I'm a lover of the old-timers, and there was a fellow when I was a little boy ... his name was Eddie Cantor. He was an entertainer in the 1930s, and towards the end of his life, I caught some of his movies, and he had a saying. It said this: "It takes 20 years to be an overnight success," and what that basically means ... It might not have to take us 20 years, but getting to be a successful author, like anything else, takes a lot of hard work and Rome wasn't built in a day. Your book isn't going to necessarily be magically embraced by your customers one, two, three, so what you have to do is constantly work hard. When the right time comes, you have to be ready to go brand yourself and respond to that need.

Susan Friedmann: Let's talk about some essentials of a strong brand, things that authors need to know in order to rise above that noise in today's increasingly competitive marketplace.

John Tantillo: I think what you have to do ... Once again, it starts with the customer. Yeah, you're the idea creator, no question about it, but it's almost like writing a headline, or it's almost like writing the title for the book. What's going to draw them in, and how are you as the author going to satisfy the needs? If you write love novels, what are the characters going to do to get you to want to turn the page, and for you to want to

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start a book club, and get other people to talk about it? If you're writing a self-help book, what're you going to do to help me be successful in a relationship, or get that new job? Why does Harry get the job and I don't? Is it the way I dress? Is it the way I interact with people? Is it the way I groom? Is it because I don't wear a starched shirt? Maybe it's because I wear the wrong kind of clothing.

It's got to be looking at oneself and really get down to the bare bones as to whether or not your brand ... what the perception of your brand is to your customers, whether or not it's resonating with them and satisfying their need. And you have to identify what their need is, and it depends on what kind of an author you are. Like I said, if you're a novelist, after you're a novelist, are you in the horror genre, are you in the mystery genre, are you interested in ... whatever it is, you have to identify with that. And just maybe, you're writing a book and you find out that there is this, now, need ... everybody's talking about zombies. You say, "oh, good god. I can't do that," but maybe if you have a zombie kind of character in there, it might be able to work. That's the kind of stuff you have to think about.

I'll give you an example. I've been asked to submit a proposal to the tourist industry. As a matter of fact, it's going to be up in Saranac Lakes, Lake Placid. It's very funny we have this call. I'm coming and I'm thinking about, "Well, what do I want to talk about?" If you look about what everybody is yelling, screaming, and carrying on about ... I hate to use the SM word. It's social media. Everybody's talking about social media, so I basically am going to do something about social media and talk about that's only half of it. The first half is to come up with a strategy, that social media is the tactical end when you're developing a marketing plan or a brand plan for your particular location, but what is the strategy, what's the message that you have using the social media tactics? It's only one-half of the equation. That's what I think we have to do. We have to understand what the marketplace is, what's going on, the undercurrents, so that we can go brand ourselves effectively. Is this making sense, Susan?

Susan Friedmann: It certainly is, and many of our authors are non-fiction, but I love the idea of even utilizing the trend of zombies in a non-fiction environment if you want to brand yourself and set yourself apart from the competition.

John Tantillo: Yes. Don't be a zombie. Go brand yourself or something like that. Can't play it. It has to make some sort of sense. There's nothing more

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frustrating ... you get a great title, and then the lecture or the presentation is nothing like the headline. That's a great way of losing customers, so you got to be very, very conscious and make sure that you constantly weave or integrate what you're saying in your title into your text and into your copy.

Susan Friedmann: You mention the word strategy, and are there some common brand strategy challenges that entrepreneurs often face?

John Tantillo: The problem is, they think that because they came up with an original idea, that their idea is going to resonate with people. It may or may not, and what you have to do basically is test it out. My recommendation is, you have an idea, what you want to do is do your own informal focus group and find out what people are in fact thinking about. I'll give you an example of that. There is this celebrity chef, and I'm not going to mention a name because I don't want to get in trouble, but this person ... it's her own television show and she's coming out with a dog food line. Now as a branding guy, I just thought it would tarnish her brand making dog food.

As a matter of fact, somebody put up the old Jackie Gleason where Alice has in the refrigerator dog food and Ralph doesn't realize it and tastes it, and it's delicious, and what he does is he takes it to this food manufacturer who says, "Oh, this is delicious, but it reminds me of something." And then the other executive who's with them says, "Yeah, it's dog food." When they hear that, it's no longer appealing. My point is that that's the way I perceived it as a brand person, but when I put it on Facebook, my perception wasn't the right perception. Just because I don't like or I don't think it's a good idea, it doesn't necessarily mean that my customers might not think it's a good idea.

That's the kind of thing that we fall for sometimes. We forget, and people sometimes don't want to tell us the truth. How do you get somebody to like you? You tell them what they want to hear. We are not honest, necessarily, with giving honest feedback. What I would urge our listeners to do is to be conscious that the need that they have is a real need, not a concocted need on their part. Does that make sense?

Susan Friedmann: That does, and it also raises the question, can somebody, or would you even advise somebody, to have two different kinds of brands. If so, how

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would you distinguish one from the other, and would you have to have separate marketing strategies for each one?

John Tantillo: Yes, we should have two different brands, and big companies have done that. I'll give you an example of that. Disney Films, when they wanted to do more serious films, had a brand called Touchstone Films which were more serious films. Mel Brooks, the comedian, when he wants to do more serious film has Brooks Films. You don't see Mel Brooks, because if you have your brand as so strong in the minds of your customers, it's very, very hard to break away from that. Another example of that from a personality perspective is Bill Murray the actor, actually the comedian, who tried to get into serious acting and his first attempt at that was Lost Horizon. He never really recovered from that because he was so affiliated with comedy and Saturday Night Live, nobody really saw him as a serious actor. You got to be very, very careful about that.

Mark Twain's name was not really Mark Twain, was it? He knew that there's a difference between Mark Twain and what is it ... Samuel Garpins?

John Tantillo: We have to be careful about that because remember: each brand has its own group of customers, and it's own perceptions. As a result, you should have a separate marketing plan based on that. In the corporate world ... I hope I do not shock people, but the Lexus is a souped-up Toyota. The high end of General Motors products, or Chevrolet, is a Cadillac. There are always brands with their own strategy and their own group of targeted customers that are associated with different brands.

Susan Friedmann: Yes, I just recently found out that BMW owns Rolls-Royce, and so apparently, Rolls-Royce is very similar in terms of the engine of the top brand of the BMWs, so yes.

John Tantillo: Audi is the high end part of Volkswagen.

Susan Friedmann: Correct.

John Tantillo: I don't know ... This is done all the time. What you don't want to do is you do not want to cause confusion in the marketplace for your particular brand.

Susan Friedmann: Let's talk about some common mistakes, and I think you've mentioned a few, but let's talk about them as actual mistakes that people make when establishing a brand presence for themselves.

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John Tantillo:

What you don't want to do, and I hope I'm not repeating myself, is to think that you're making a better mousetrap, when in fact you're not really making a better mousetrap that people want. I remember my first marketing class that I was told that in the '30s, what they wanted to do is they wanted to make the reusable best mousetrap in the world. They came up with it, and it flopped, and the reason that it flopped was because they found out that when the mice were caught, and you had to let the poor mouse go to the heavens, what would happen is that the woman of the house in those days didn't want to reuse it. They just wanted to throw out the mousetrap, so that a reusable mousetrap was what manufacturers thought that the marketplace wanted, but it wasn't necessarily what the end user or customers wanted.

What you want to do is you want to make sure that your customers are responding, or will respond, to your book or towards what you're selling. Very hard sometimes to do, especially today, and things change. I hope I don't scare any of our listeners away when I say that, but ... I wouldn't say all people, but people are reading less and less. The question is, what do you we do to change that, or what do we do to respond to that? Not necessarily change it, but to respond to it. Well maybe what you have to do is put a, god forbid, video to it. Maybe what you have to do is add an event to it. Maybe what you have to do ... And that goes with research. You have to find out what established authors are doing to meet this demand, and meet these kinds of changes in the marketplace. I don't have an answer. I'm just saying that's where social media comes in, and to use it effectively. It's all about looking at the marketplace and finding out the best ways to get your customers to respond to what you're doing today.

Susan Friedmann:

Some of our listeners may be in the position that I've been in a few times, and that is to have to rebrand themselves. What're some of the basics that we need to take into consideration when doing this?

John Tantillo:

When you're going to rebrand yourself, you can't be something that you're not. You have to be yourself. I remember the story about Tony Bennett, and he did a little bit of rebranding. There were certain things that he would not do, and that would be change the way he would perform. For him, he still performed in a tuxedo. A lot of people say to me, "Well, why do you wear a hat when you're on television? Why do you wear a hat and a bow tie? You should take it off. You look old. You look like you're a throwback," and I said, "You know what? You may be right," but let me tell you, when I go through the airport, and I see young kids under the age of 17 [inaudible 00:19:22] me, boys and girls; when I see people under the age of 25 telling me I look cool; when I see

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people that are under 40 responding to me; and the people that are telling me that I should rebrand myself are people who are older who may not feel comfortable with it, then I say, "Well, who's my market? Who's my target market?"

That's the secret. When you rebrand yourself, it's who is your target market, and what characteristic are they going to respond to when you do that rebrand? And please make sure that you are yourself, and to thy own brand be true. That's the secret.

Susan Friedmann: Those are great words of wisdom. If our listeners would like to contact you and find out more about your marketing or branding services, how can they do that?

John Tantillo: It's very easy. You can go to my website, and it's very easy. It's johntantillo.com. That's my anchor site, and from there you can go to the Marketing Doctor site. If you want to get in touch with me, it's simply doc@johntantillo.com, and you can follow me on Twitter @marketingdoctor. All of that information's on the website. It's a beautiful thing, Susan.

Susan Friedmann: It's a really nice website, by the way, and yes, your brand is that hat and just the way you look. You do stand out, and I love the fact that you use Dr. T as part of your brand, so I really like that.

John Tantillo: Well, thank you so much. What you don't want to do is you don't want to push people away, you want to bring people in. That's always the secret. What I try to do is give marketing and branding a personal touch.

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

John Tantillo: It's not about you, it's about your customers and your readers.

Susan Friedmann: Those, again, are wise words of wisdom, so thank you so much. 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.