

BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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BOOK MARKETING: How to Target the Right Readers with eBook Giveaways Interview with Ashley Durrer

- 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 Ashley Durrer, an out-of-the-box thinker who helps connect authors to readers and readers to authors. Ashley is the Business Development Director at InstaFreebie, a company dedicated to accelerating great stories and big ideas. As the book world's leading platform for exclusive access to sneak peeks, advance previews and special giveaways, InstaFreebie lives its mission every day and gives readers a chance to see it first. They encourage authors to build a dedicated audience of readers by giving away free copies of their book.
- Ashley moved from Los Angeles to Massachusetts to study at the Northeastern University. A couple of years in she worked at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston developing and implementing programs to enrich experiences for individuals. She's a lover of dance, photography and film and most of all, her major passion is helping artists, particularly authors, with their book success. So, Ashley, welcome and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.
- Ashley Durrer: Thanks so much Susan. That was a really great intro so thank you for that.
- Susan Friedmann: My pleasure. I think I had a little help from somebody I know. Ashley, I'm totally intrigued with the InstaFreebie's model of building a dedicated audience of readers by giving away free copies of your book. Could you tell our listeners how this concept actually works.
- Ashley Durrer: It's taken us a little over two years to kind of figure this out and really what it meant to us. So it starts from a philosophical place. It's all about reciprocity and really offering a gift to someone not necessarily expecting anything in return, so you're actually starting the relationship

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out on a very positive note with a reader by sharing content for free. That's kind of really where it came about and it's been a lot of fun.

Susan Friedmann: It's a great concept. Let's look at the process in terms of who actually controls the giveaway process.

Ashley Durrer: I know for a lot of authors it can seem pretty scary to give out your content for free but it does create a very positive experience with the reader and actually builds a fan right away. When you're doing this with InstaFreebie, you have the control to be able to say, "Okay, I only want to give out 10 copies and I actually want to make sure that this giveaway expires on this date." So you can set those parameters so that you can make sure that your content is only going as far as you want it to. So we have those in place and the author controls that so you have full control to be able to do that.

Susan Friedmann: Then what of the advantage of actually giving away the ebook?

Ashley Durrer: So the advantages of giving away the ebook is that you not only have this positive experience that you're creating for the reader, but it's an opportunity to give them a taste of your work before they actually buy it. Instead of them finding it and they're like, "Oh, maybe I'm interested in it. Okay, I think I am so I'm going to go buy it." Then they buy it and they're like, "Well actually I really didn't like it," and now they have this bad taste in their mouth and they're kind of unhappy about it.

You can avoid that entirely by sharing a free sample or sharing a free book with your audience first and then if it's not quite right for them, they're like, "Well, you know, that's okay," and they can move on and you can move on. Then for those readers who it is the right fit, they are the right reader for you, they get really, really excited and they're like, "Wow. This author did this really great thing and shared this with me. Oh, I want to see what else they're doing, what else are they writing. Oh, I think I want to buy their next book," or, "I want to leave a review for them."

So then depending on what your goals are, you're able to connect with the reader who's really excited about your work. You're able to get reviews, and then you're able to engage with them so that you can make sales on future content.

Susan Friedmann: So how exactly do you bring the author and the reader together?

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- Ashley Durrer: There are thousands of authors on InstaFreebie and they're doing giveaways every day. Readers come through the site for author giveaways and then we work together with authors and we work together with readers and we connect them through our recommendations. So actually I really recommend authors making their giveaways shareable so that we know that we can recommend their content to more readers as well.
- Susan Friedmann: So do the authors have to go through any kind of special process to get their book approved by you? How does that work?
- Ashley Durrer: We really believe that there's an opportunity for every author. There isn't a strict process for an author coming on to the site. Anybody who is an author or a writer can join and you can start connecting with readers. It's about connecting you, the author, with the right reader for you. I'm sure as you know through meeting people in life that everybody is different. Some of us get along and some of us don't and that's okay and so it's about connecting with the right people.
- Susan Friedmann: I know that you have a lot of fiction books in your library there. What about non-fiction?
- Ashley Durrer: We do have some non-fiction. I would love to see more. There's just so much great content there, it would be awesome to see more.
- Susan Friedmann: You don't have to necessarily give away the whole book. Is that what you're saying? You can just give away a part of it? How does that work?
- Ashley Durrer: A lot of the fiction authors, and they do I guess dominate the market at the moment, they give out sample chapters. So sometimes it'll be chapter one, sometimes one-to-three, sometimes it's like half of the book. It kind of depends on the length of their content. Others will do short stories and novellas. Sometimes they'll even write more about a scene that their audience liked and then share that as a reward. So you can definitely give away samples of content, and then others will give away the full book.
- As far as some of our non-fiction writers, I've seen a lot of them do samples as well. There's definitely people giving out full books as well.
- We do a daily newsletter with the different genres and so you'll see some of them there each week.

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- Susan Friedmann: So you have people who you email every day then, or every week with, as you say, your new additions to the giveaways. Is there a limited number of days, weeks that you keep your book up there? How does that work?
- Ashley Durrer: We not only recommend authors shareable campaigns or giveaways but we also help to promote authors in our newsletter, which we do a daily newsletter, one each day, Monday through Friday, and we do different genres. So we'll promote those books all week and then the next week we'll promote new authors that we hadn't promoted before.
- Susan Friedmann: So once you've promoted an author, do they stay in the library or do they come off? How does that work?
- Ashley Durrer: It's specific to the author. Some of them will have campaigns that are going on for a very long time, so they'll have an unlimited campaign. It's shareable and it's public. They're really looking to engage with subscribers. They're looking to connect with readers so they can add them to their mailing lists. So they'll keep those campaigns open for a very long time. So we'll promote it and as long as their campaign is still shareable, we'll still recommend it. It really depends on what the author's doing and what their goal is.
- If you're looking to cultivate a group of readers who you want to be able to share your book with for free in order to get an honest review, that's called an Advanced Reader Copy or sometimes they're called street teams too. That's when authors will make sure their campaigns are private so that they can only share it with those people. So it does depend on your goals, what you're doing how long your giveaway is open. That's something that you control so it's up to the author.
- Susan Friedmann: Is this a free service? Is this something the authors have to pay for?
- Ashley Durrer: We have a free portion of the site where any author can come on and you can distribute your content to readers. If you already have a street team or an Advanced Reader Copy group, that's a great way to distribute your content to them instead of having to be like, "Okay. This person wants a Mobi file for their Kindle, and this person wants an ebook for their Nook, and this other person needs a PDF," so this takes away that pain.
- Our paid account, it does all of that but then it also signs up those readers to your list as well.

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Susan Friedmann: When you say it signs up the readers to the list, that means that anybody who wants to download the book ... for instance, if I put a book up there and I was a paying customer and somebody wanted to download my book, you would then forward that person's information to me? Is that how it works?

Ashley Durrer: We would fulfill the delivery of the book and then, yeah, you would have the contact information, their name and email to be able to contact them in the future.

Susan Friedmann: Is that something then the reader has agreed to do so that they would be okay with then me having them on my list and then marketing to them?

Ashley Durrer: Yes. Absolutely.

Susan Friedmann: Okay. So they have agreed to that. What about the security of the book files, you know, so that it only goes to the people who for instance I would want it to go to? How is that controlled?

Ashley Durrer: Anybody who has the giveaway link is able to access the giveaway so if you don't want it to get out to a lot of people, then you wouldn't make your campaign shareable or public. It would probably be private. Then you could then just share it with people that you wanted to. If that's your goal, you just make your campaign private and then the people with the link are the ones that have access to that book. Authors who are looking to do that will also then limit the books, the number of books that they're giving away and they also put an expiration date so that they know that the campaign will close after a certain amount of time too.

That's all there so you can protect your campaign and achieve what you want to.

Susan Friedmann: So is there an optimum time for a campaign? Is it seven days? Is it 14 days, 30 days? What do you find is ... for the best results?

Ashley Durrer: I don't have a good answer for that right now because I've seen authors do various scenarios. What I would say though is to not think about it as just a book launch in that your content, your stories, your book, your ideas are your tools to constantly engage with readers and with fans. I wouldn't recommend just thinking about the one-time book launch but

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actually thinking about this as a long-term strategy so that you are engaging readers constantly.

If you think about it in this mindset, you're not just thinking about, "Okay. I've got my next book coming out. I'm going to prepare a couple weeks ahead of time and I'm going to create some buzz and some activity. Okay. Now I'm done." So rather than think about it that way, you do want it to be an ongoing activity that could look like doing exclusive previews and sneak peeks. Maybe even that could be several weeks in advance of when your book is actually coming out and then maybe you do want to share 10 copies of the full book if you're a non-fiction writer to reward some of those fans that were really, really interested and then maybe later on, you want to share specific chapters because the idea within that chapter is really, really important to you.

You want to help change someone's life with advice, or maybe you want to talk about positive leadership and you've got this really great chapter on it and so you kind of take that out and you share that with some people so that you can help someone, you can connect with someone. Then maybe they come in through that way. There are really a lot of different ways and a lot of different durations of a giveaway campaign that can really help you to make this an ongoing effort versus just a book launch.

Susan Friedmann: You mentioned reviews earlier. So if I wanted reviews on a book, how would that work into that campaign?

Ashley Durrer: In this ongoing effort, I would say you need to think about what your goals are as a non-fiction author. Say you're a new author and maybe you got a book or two and you want to get reviews. So if your goal is reviews then it's going to be worth the time and the effort to share that book for free, to engage people very easily and not create a lot of fiction, and then let them know, follow up with them and let them know, "Hey, I want to know what you thought of my book." You know, maybe they'll email you back and tell you ... If you set it up right you can also get reviews from that too. So I would definitely say if you're looking for reviews, sharing that free ebook is going to be very, very valuable to you.

Susan Friedmann: Now how does this service that you offer through InstaFreebie's differ for instance from the Kindle offering when they allow you to promote your book let's say for a week and give it away for free, or only charge .99 cents for it?

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Ashley Durrer: So let's say if you're doing that on any retailer, that's really affecting your place within that store. It's going to help to improve your ranking. It's going to help you to be more visible among readers on that store front, but it doesn't actually tell you who the reader is. So where we're really helping is that the customer is important. It's really important to learn who they are and what they want and so we want you to connect with the reader and that's why we give you that opportunity because it's just so, so important for you to understand who your readers are and what they're looking for because if you know that better, then you can better serve them and you can provide better content for them too.

Susan Friedmann: Does a book have to be brand new in order to do this promotion or can you use a book that let's say has been on the market for a while?

Ashley Durrer: Yeah, you can absolutely use a book that's been on the market for a while. You can use content from your backlist if you've got books that have been out for a while. Absolutely. I mean, there's millions and millions of people in the world. It's very likely that you have not reached all of them yet.

Susan Friedmann: How about advice? What kind of advice do you offer authors when it comes to building a relationship with their readership?

Ashley Durrer: That's an awesome question. I would say, learning about your readers is crucial. It's kind of like what I just said. If you don't understand the readers that are coming to you, then it's going to be really hard for you to engage and to talk with them. When you're building your newsletter or your mailing list and you've got these readers that you're connected with, it's great not only to share your content with them and reward them, but you can also survey them and ask polls so that you can learn what you're doing right and what you're doing wrong so that you can improve and then make it that much more of a valuable experience for them.

So I wouldn't underestimate understanding the readers that you are starting to engage with. It's really important to understand who they are and then to connect with them on a personal level. Readers are always looking to connect with authors and that's why we always hear about high open and click rates from a lot of the authors that we work with including one of our non-fiction authors that we work with, Nicholas Caldwell. He actually wrote us a blog that's really great and I would recommend checking out so you can see from a non-fiction perspective how this works.

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So, yeah, my advice would be learn about your reader so that you can make it a more valuable experience and connect with them on a personal level.

Susan Friedmann: That'll be a great link that I'll definitely put on the website is to link through to that particular blog because I think it would be important for our authors and listeners to read that.

How about mistakes that authors make? What do you find when you're working with them?

Ashley Durrer: One mistake that I've found ... We talk about different strategies on how you can share ... because authors really love that we share too, so as you're sharing your giveaway campaign we'll help to boost it and to accelerate it by sharing it with more readers too. So we talk about how it's really important to remember to engage your current fans because you want to reward them for their engagement so far and you want to keep them as readers. So that looks like sharing giveaways with them through your newsletter but also social media and you know other ways that you can market online and even at events.

So through both a newsletter and social media, we've seen things happen where it really becomes spam and when you get to a point where you're constantly selling your book and that's all that your reader is seeing, it can get tiring for the reader. So when we talk about how important it is to learn about your reader and to actually connect with them on a personal level, that's really what that means to you as a writer, that can really help to mitigate that and actually engage them on a higher level and still be able to get reviews or to get sales, whatever your goal is as a writer.

So it's really important to be careful of when something starts to become too spammy.

Susan Friedmann: What kind of promotion other than obviously listing the book on your website, and you're putting out to your readers then the new choices for the week. Are you doing anything on social media to promote or how does that work?

Ashley Durrer: We not only recommend content coming through the site to readers, but we also do a daily newsletter for different genres each day. So we'll send that out through our newsletter but it'll be up on our home page

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for that week. Then we also do a social media post on Facebook, Twitter, and we're getting that Instagram up and running again.

Susan Friedmann: Excellent. What's the size of your mailing list?

Ashley Durrer: To give you some perspective, we've had 13 million downloads go through the site up to this point. It took us a year really to get to a million downloads and it was really hard, so each download is an opportunity for an author to connect with the reader. So there's really a vast opportunity. Then we have hundreds of thousands of readers within our community that we help to connect authors with.

Susan Friedmann: So they always say the first million is the hardest.

Ashley Durrer: It was definitely very hard.

Susan Friedmann: The rest is easy.

Ashley Durrer: It's still hard along the way. Constant communication, working together. It's something that everybody has to do throughout life. I would recommend authors keep that in mind too. It's just as important as an author.

Susan Friedmann: Absolutely. How can our authors contact you to find out more about this incredible service?

Ashley Durrer: They can email us at support@instafreebie.com and if you really want to talk to me, you can just say, "Hey, attention Ashley," and I'll make sure that I talk to you. Not a problem. That'll just be the easiest way to make sure we get eyeballs on it very quickly.

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

Ashley Durrer: I would definitely say for InstaFreebie we really want to help to accelerate the great stories that you're writing and the big ideas that you want to share. If you can make your campaigns shareable and public, we're going to be able to help you do that so much more quickly. Then just for any writer and author out there, we really believe in working together with people whether they're a writer, an author or a reader, if you can think about the other person in terms of how you can work together so that you can both be successful, that's really important to me and it's really important to our team.

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So I would challenge everybody to think about their work in that way and when they're interacting with others to think about it that way.

Susan Friedmann:

Thank you for sharing so much great wisdom. Listeners, if you want to take your author marketing to the next level of success, make sure that you go to bookmarketingmentors.com and sign up for a 15-minute complimentary coaching session with me, Susan Friedman.

But most of all, let me thank you for taking time out of your precious day to listen to this interview and I sincerely hope that it sparked some ideas you can use to sell more books.

Here's wishing you much book marketing success.