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BOOK MARKETING: How to Ask and Get What You Want Interview with Linda Byars Swindling

- Susan: 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 a negotiations expert. From the courtroom to the boardroom, Linda Byars Swindling knows firsthand about engaging in high-stakes communications, negotiating workplace drama, and influencing decision makers. Her specialty is helping people communicate powerfully so that others will listen. Linda is CEO of Journey On, a Dallas-based professional development organization, which offers speaking, training, consulting and executive coaching services. Linda first addressed employment and workplace communication issues as a successful attorney and mediator. In 2000, she left a 10-year legal practice and partnership to start her own business. In addition to running Journey On, Linda spent five years with Vistage, the world's largest CEO development organization. Her clients include Fortune 500 companies from a wide variety of industries, governmental entities and many international associations.
- A TEDxSMU presenter, she is the author and co-author of more than 20 books including her bestseller *Stop Complainers and Energy Drainers: How to Negotiate Work Drama to Get More Done*, and her soon to be released book, *Ask Outrageously: The Secret to Getting What You Really Want*. A fellow Certified Speaking Professional, Linda and I served together on the executive board of the National Speakers Association. She's a long time friend and colleague, so Linda, what a true pleasure it is to welcome you to the show as this week's guest expert and mentor.
- Linda Swindling: Thanks, Susan, for having me.
- Susan: It's wonderful. Linda, a negotiations expert. Talk to us about the importance of negotiation as a published author.

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- Linda Swindling: It's so important. So many of us don't ask for what we really need in a contract. I remember one of the very first contracts I signed, I actually signed away the rights for me to just use the material, material that I had invented, I had created. I had to go and ask permission to use it in a workshop or something, or I might sell the book. Just even thinking about, "What am I going to do with this book later? What do I need to use it for?" is so important, and then ask, "What could I do in order to do what I'm trying to do with this book?" whether it's build my business or maybe I'm training or maybe I would want to quote it in an article. All those things you got to think through, "What's my purpose?"
- Susan: So many authors write the book and it's chockfull of valuable information, and it's so often that gets overlooked and they get unrewarded for their efforts and talents. Why do you feel this happens?
- Linda Swindling: First off, are you writing a book that's really chockfull of information that's valuable to others, or is it valuable information to you? So that's one thing. Are you talking to the people that would want that information and would pay you? That's always one. When I focus on what my people really need, a lot of times it's a different subject. Also, I do a lot of surveys so that it's directed to them and I've done a lot of research, this is something valuable. But I tell you, Susan, the main reason is we don't repurpose our materials. We make life so hard, and instead of taking in two pages and turning that into an article or your Top 10 things that are wonderful and doing a blog post or maybe tweeting about one of those things, we don't do that.
- We recreate, re-invent, do a different article, do a different post, and that's nuts. You spent so much time writing this book, you are never going to say it better than you do on the book, so just keep remembering, "I've got to pull something else out of this book. What something that's going on in the news that I could write a few sentences about and my book right here addresses it?" That's how you do it. Just keep repurposing.
- Susan: I love repurposing. As you know, I mean I take a book and I cut and dice and slice it as many ways as possible and I know you do that so well as well. You mentioned earlier that it's difficult for us to ask. Why do you think that is?
- Linda Swindling: Believe it or not, one out of five of us has no problem whatsoever. They're your mastery questers. They will go out and ask for anything. The other 80% of us, there's several reasons. One is it's all about how

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someone might perceive us. For instance, we are afraid that we're not going to say it correctly or we are afraid that we're going to bother someone. If you think about it, that's not about the request you're making, that's all focused on you. That's all about you. Even the studies that we did said, "Why do you think people tell you no?" Why do you think when you ask, people are telling you no? Because that's going to be part of why you're blocking yourself. "All these folks said I wasn't prepared enough. I hadn't done all these research."

Another answer that was very popular was, "Well, you know, it's because it was the wrong timing. I just asked them at the wrong time." Or the third one was wrong time for money. The budget wasn't there. They just didn't have the funds to give me whatever I was asking for. Which of those three: they weren't prepared, or was the wrong time, or was the wrong budget scale or they didn't have the money, which of those three, Susan, do you think is correct?"

Susan: I don't know. Tell me.

Linda Swindling: None of them.

Susan: That's why it's so difficult-

Linda Swindling: Right, well, the two that people actually tell you no, are one, you're asking for something they can't give you. It's inappropriate. In Texas, we like chicken fried steak. If you walked into some sort of hardware store and said, "Hey, can I have my chicken fried steak?" They'd laugh at you because that's not where you buy chicken fried steak. In my world when I was an attorney, people would come to me and say, "I want an apology and I want him or her to respect me. I just want that to happen." No judge is going to say go hug, go tell him you're sorry. It just doesn't happen. It's inappropriate. That's one.

The second one though is very interesting. They said, all these folks said, "You know what, I don't like, trust or respect them. They haven't done something to earn my trust." Maybe, A, they're asking me for something I don't have authority to give them. I don't know what they want, whatever that is. But the second one, that trust, that liking, the respect, stop throwing information at me. Stop throwing research at me. People were saying, "Build some trust so I know that what you're asking me for is a valid request." Those are some big ones, if you think about it. When you go and talk to someone, "This is what I'm asking you. This is why it's appropriate for me to be here. These are my good reasons." Then you

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say, "Do you have any questions on me? What kind of conversation do we need to have?" and you're about them as well. That will help you build trust.

Susan: How about thinking that you know what the answer is going to be before you even ask the question so that you're not going to ask the question because you know the answer?

Linda Swindling: Which is crazy. We're not in other people's heads. Think about someone that's significant other. How many times has he or she said something to you and you're like, "Oh my gosh, that's not at all what I thought you were going to say. That's not the answer." This person is someone you've chosen to spend time with. How in the world are you going to know the answer with someone that's brand new to you or someone you barely see or hear or talk to? You've got to let the question sit there and that takes some guts, takes being uncomfortable a little bit, but you got to go ahead, press that envelope, ask a little outrageously, and then just shut your mouth and see what they say.

Susan: I think that's the biggest thing is shutting your mouth, zipping it close and don't outtalk yourself.

Linda Swindling: Know that you've been thinking about it for a month or two, they've had two seconds. So let them more than a few seconds to think through this big request for you because they may need to process. They may never have thought you wanted something like you're requesting. Give people the luxury and the gift of giving them a little time to think.

Susan: Are there right and wrong type questions to be asking?

Linda Swindling: I think so. What and how questions, the open-ended questions where you don't fill in the blanks for them are so much better than the close questions. An example of a close question would be, "Do you want to do this on Friday or Saturday?" It's just closed. You say something like, "Would you like me to write this for you by February or would it be better for me to write it by March?" You've given them two answers, this or this, and they are going to have to choose because it's closed. They're going to have to say yes or no, April or February, or February or March. If you say something like, "When you're thinking about deadlines, what are you thinking about? How would you like that to sound? What else would you want to have happened?" Let them pause, let them think, let them answer, and then ask your next question, which is a follow-up. "Can you tell me some more about that?" "Oh, I hadn't

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heard that word before" or "I hadn't thought of that. What else were you thinking?" Let people tell you what they're thinking before you start solving their problems.

Susan: That's so important. I see that happen all the times. Let's talk about your new book, the "Ask Outrageously," which, by the way, is a fabulous title. You talk about an ASK strategy in the book, how to banish blocks for asking questions. Talk to us about that.

Linda Swindling: I get nervous and I forget what to say. I think a lot of us do that. One of the things, even when you get nervous, you can always remember, "Oh yeah, when I'm nervous, when I'm scared, when I'm not sure what's going on, when I'm uncertain, I can always ask questions." There's three, the acronym is A: What am I aware of? What did the person just say? What do I need to ask about it? What am I aware of that I'm feeling right now? Is my heart beating really fast? You can ask yourself questions. The first one is really becoming aware of the situation about what someone is saying to you. I'm surprised. What would you do? It's fine. That's a fine question to ask someone. I hadn't planned on hearing this news. How would you handle it? Or what are you looking for me to respond? That's if you really get rattled, you can always ask.

Now the second is seek. At first, you're just aware of what's going on around you, the words you just heard. The next is you're really seeking knowledge. On that, you're really saying, "What I heard you say is this. What else should I know?" How are people feeling about this? What's the situation at hand? You're seeking some more information before you give an answer. Then the last one is just know your next step, your next best request. You don't have to solve a problem if they rattle you, if they surprise you. You can immediately go to, "Hmm, what do I need to do now just for this time? What question would make sense for me to ask?"

If I get shocked, I might want some time to think over what someone's asking me. My next best request might be, "This is hitting me new. Thank you for giving me the information you have. What I'm going to need is till the end of the day to determine what's going on here or to go seek some more information, or to really think through this because I want to give you a good answer. I know you've been thinking about this problem, this issue, this situation for a while, and I want to give you a really good answer too.

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- Susan: What this also says is that you should be prepared with questions and not try and just wing it. Is that correct?
- Linda Swindling: If you can, you want to go in to a situation with some general questions, what and how questions, but the ASK method also really helps you when you're rattled, when someone surprises you, when they present a situation that you had no knowledge about. If you were in, for instance, a sales situation and someone called you about a program that didn't get delivered the way you wanted, or your books didn't happen or they didn't get delivered, or something was wrong. The first thing you want to do is breathe and then you can ask them questions. "Okay, so first off, what am I aware of? I'm aware that this person is very tense. I'm aware that this person is unhappy. What questions could I ask about that? Then I need to seek more information because I can't solve the problem. I didn't know that the books didn't get delivered. I didn't know that this person's question didn't get answered. What are they trying to have me do?" Then I know the next step that's just, "What's my next best request here? What do I need to ask to give me some time to think through it? Maybe I want to ask, 'So what do you think is a fair solution?'" That's always a good question, "So what do you think would be fair to fix this?"
- Or, if someone have authority over me, what I might say is, "If you are in my position, what would you say right now? What would you be thinking? How would you want someone to respond?" Just see what they say.
- Susan: Now, what about having a toolbox of questions, maybe half a dozen questions that you know that you could be asking?
- Linda Swindling: If you're in the same situation over and over again, so a lot of my books are written around consulting work I do and training work or speaking, and I'll go back in. Some of my common questions when I'm dealing with decision makers are what's going to be their outcomes? What's their desired outcome? But that sounds like a really hard question to ask somebody, "What's your desired outcome?" Yuck. What I will say is, "If everything went according to plan or even exceeded, what would that look like? What would a win look like to you? Huh, how would you know you hit it?"
- They will say something like, "Well, what do you mean?" "You said a win would be you'd make another 2% on this, right? How would you know that you were progressing that way?" "Oh, we'd start seeing more

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orders. People would start asking more questions." Or, "How would you know that the team was working better together?" "I'd stop getting these crazy emails I keep getting all the time. I'd see so and so go and talk to someone. I'd hear about how great my employee was." Use your what and how questions there as well, but yeah, go in with some prepared ones. You always want to go in with a "What's a win?" or "What would a perfect outcome look like?" and then you want to ask how will they measure it? What's the evidence? "How would you measure that? How would you know that that happened?"

Then always say something along the lines of "What in your mind would be happening to reach that outcome?" Then I always ask them, "What's going to stand in our way? What's going to keep this from happening?" Those are some good, "What are you looking for? What do you wanted to sound like? What do you wanted to feel like? How will you know?" and then that final one, as always, "What's going to stand in the way?" I might circle back around and I might say, "Okay, so if that comes up, how would you deal with it?" Often they'll say, "Well, what might stand in the way is I've got three guys who are knuckleheads and they're not pulling their weight on this team." "Okay, how would you address that?" "Well, what do you mean?" "Well, if they become knuckleheads in a meeting, how are you going to handle that? What are you going to do?"

Or, if I'm writing about real estate and I say, maybe I'm training along some training materials that go along with a book, you might say, "Okay, so what do you think might prevent this real estate folks from selling the way they need to or from being a great broker?" "Great. How would you handle that?" Ask those folks that you're talking to, to go ahead and plan out what outcomes they'd like to have and how they'll know they'll get there, but also what obstacles they'll see. At the end, you can always say, "So if we can hit the things you've told us, if we can reach those goals and you're hearing and feeling and seen all these results and there's now a process to address obstacles that people are facing, would that be acceptable? Would that be worthy of paying this amount of money?"

Those questions will help you like a table of contents does: What's the issue? What's the problem? What would you like to have happen? What's standing in your way? Great. If we hit all these things, would that be worth investing in? Would that be worth doing? Would that be worth writing about? Whatever your question is. That's usually when you'll get people to say, "Yeah, that would be worth it. If I could solve this problem and have a process that would be worth it."

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- Susan: Standing in your way, that's a great question. What are the obstacles? I think we often fail to ask that kind of a question.
- Linda Swindling: A lot of times people will say, "Well, I guess there's nothing standing in my way." They have this soft awareness. A lot of us block ourselves, too, don't we? We have these self-limiting beliefs and we stop ourselves from asking and that's nuts. Just because you wouldn't say yes doesn't mean that someone else won't. They might say yes to you. Even if you would say no to the person, they may say yes. It's worth throwing it out there, asking a little out of your comfort zone, being a little outrageous.
- Susan: How about fees? Asking for what it is that you would really like for a fee for coaching or for speaking? How about handling that because often I know that I think people are frightened to ask for what they want because they maybe don't even feel that they're really worth it?
- Linda Swindling: That's it exactly. You definitely want to do that. A lot of times it's evidence. We need some evidence that we've been successful. If you don't have a love me file, get a love me file. Print out those great emails or write down a comment somebody said and put it in a file, and it needs to be physical, so you can pull up that notebook or that file and look at it. We forget, just like you said, we don't use this great information that we create. We also forget about all the things that we've been successful at. My funny story in that is my husband bought at awards cabinet for me. Are you ready for why, Susan?
- Susan: Why?
- Linda Swindling: I was wanting all these awards and then I would put them very safely in a guest bathtub. Ain't that nuts?
- Susan: I love it.
- Linda Swindling: Yeah. So he said, "If you're going to win the darn things, we're going to put them so you can see them so you don't do silly things to get more awards and you really own it." That's why you need to go ahead and say, "On my fees, I am worth this and if they don't pay that amount, then they're going to see me as the cheaper option. They're going to see me as someone that they don't want to use." In coaching, if you know what you're doing and people have results, my goodness, ask for the money so that they will appreciate what you're doing for them. There is nothing worse than doing stuff for free and then people don't value it. They just keep going back to the well for more. If you charge a

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substantial fee, something that you're worth, something that you can prove, something that the market will bear, that other coaches that aren't as good as you are, are charging, why in the world wouldn't you charge that? You must charge it because if you say, "It's \$800," and someone says, "Wow, that's a lot." You say, "Well, I'm committed. That \$800 might be a commitment for them." Maybe it's \$8,000, but it certainly isn't 80.

Susan: I remember when I started out early on that I thought I'd be the cheapest when it came to training, and I actually lost the business because they didn't feel that they wanted cheap when it came to training. People are prepared to pay for good training.

Linda Swindling: Yeah. The reverse argument is, so I have it easy because I teach negotiations. A lot of you teach personal development and confidence and speaking and just a variety of things where you're telling people to be stronger and braver and smarter. When they say, "Well, is it negotiable?" Of course, it's always negotiable, and it's going to be reflective of my experience because you don't want someone who doesn't know what they're doing and doesn't know how to negotiate their fees to be training your folks. You don't want the cheapest options from your people. You really don't want me to give you it either. They're like, "No, no, you're right. We want you and we want to pay what it's worth."

One other thing, we're so much more comfortable asking for other people than ourselves. It's 65% of us would much rather ask for someone else than ourselves, and that's many in women. Women have a little bit of problems with the word negotiate, change its request, they have no problem. But the asking for ourselves is tough. Would you like some hints about that? Do you see that?

Susan: Whatever you can give us, we are going to lap up, Linda.

Linda Swindling: Yeah. On asking for yourself, what I want you to think about is who, besides myself, does it help? For instance, if I make a higher fee, who besides myself ...? Well, maybe your creditors. You can pay them off. Or maybe it's your family. Maybe you can finally take a vacation. Maybe you can move out of the apartment and into a house. Or it could be, in law school, I was so just overwhelmed and I just felt like all those people were superior to me. But when I finally got up the guts to ask a question, I was shocked. People after the class will come up to me and

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say, "That was a great question. Are you going to ask anything about this topic?" or, "What classes are you taking next semester?"

It's because I didn't mind asking the stupid questions. Why I didn't mind was I had to think about who else was affected? It wasn't just my classmates. It really was me. It would be far more embarrassing for me to fail out of law school, tell my sweet husband who was also going to school and delivering pizzas that I had failed because I hadn't asked a question. Maybe I looked a little stupid in front of some of those classmates. Well, who cares? They weren't going to hire me. They're not going to help me get through school. Asking questions, ask for yourself, and then ask for the people it also affects.

Susan: I think something that you said is so important. There's no such thing as a stupid question.

Linda Swindling: Well, no, there's some stupid questions. There's some stupid questions, but ...

Susan: Was that one of them?

Linda Swindling: No. The people that listen to people like you aren't going to ask them. You don't give up your time to improve yourself and listen to other experts if you are going to be just wasting people's time with stupid questions. That's not who your audience is. That makes no sense. Just know that the questions that you're asking other people have, ask them first. Be the first one to the request. You're missing out on opportunity to do work or maybe you've seen promotion go to someone, or someone gets a piece of business you didn't get because you didn't ask. There was only one piece of business. There's only one promotion. There's only one trip to Europe and you could have had it if you just ask first. Ask. Just go out there and just ask outrageously and see what happens.

Susan: How about mistakes? What are some of the common mistakes that you find that people make when they're asking questions?

Linda Swindling: they hold themselves back. They think, "Well, gosh, I don't even know if this is possible." Well, sure you do. It wouldn't have come into your mind if it wasn't somewhat possible. People will prepare. We will get so ready. Think about it for a month and get all the way prepare and talk to all our friends and all of our buddies, and then we don't ask. On the website, later you can get some tools. There is a permission slip. Go get

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that permission slip and just write as many as you need to yourself. I give myself permission to ask about this. Then you have a permission slip. Stop trying to get a committee together to tell you that what you know as a good idea is a good idea. Just start asking.

Susan: That leads right into how our listeners can contact you for more information about your services because I know they're itching to learn more.

Linda Swindling: AskOutrageously.com is the website. I tell you, if you all want to get out your mobile phones, there's a very easy way for me to connect you to a couple of links. What you do is you text, like you're doing it to somebody. Instead of to Linda or to Susan, you'll text in the number 42828. That's 42828. Then the message is just the word ASK. Hit send. It will ask you for your email and it'll link you to a bunch of different resources that are located throughout the websites that I've got, and those are my favorites. If you want leadership and negotiation tools, you can get those every month. If you don't, just press unsubscribe. I know we've talked about a lot. It takes some practice. You've got to keep reading it over and over again. That's one way or you can go to the AskOutrageously.com website and poke around. Go that Media section and you'll see what we do to help promote the books, what do we do to get the word out and keep repurposing.

Susan: Fabulous information. If you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be, Linda?

Linda Swindling: I want you to start going for the no. I want you to all to go somewhere safe. That's what I did when I had to start learning this. I went to garage sales or yard sales in different neighborhoods so no one would even know who I was. I want you to start asking all the time. Ask people for the outrageous. "Hey, I see that toy there. It says \$35 on it. Would you take \$5 for it?" The worst they can say is what? "No!" You'll survive a no. Actually, if you're not hearing a no, you're not asking for enough. Go to the grocery store. Again, go to a different neighborhood. Drive a few miles, whatever you need to do. Say to people, "Hey, do you like your bread that you're getting there? I usually buy this brand. You're buying this" or "Wow, do these tomatoes look ripe?" I mean start talking to people. Ask a store clerk to help you get something from heir store.

Can you help me with this purchase? Can you get me a new pair of pants over here? They're just standing around there to help you. You need to ask them. Blow employees' minds. Here's one thing you can do.

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Go to a store. Ask to speak to the manager. When the manager comes up, tell the manager what a great employee they have. If somebody really helped you, ask to speak to that manager, that person in charge, and just see what happens. You're going to find over time that a \$2, \$5 ask request is no different than a two million. I promise you, it's the same adrenaline, the same energy. Just ask, ask, ask outrageously.

Susan:

Brilliant. I love it. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom. Thank you all for taking time out of your precious day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it sparks some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.