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BOOK MARKETING: How to Get Your Book Selling As Quickly As Possible Interview with Monica Leonelle

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 a book marketing expert. Monica Leonelle is USA Today bestselling author, best known for teaching, writing, publishing, business, and marketing at theworldneedsyourbook.com. She's helped thousands of authors write faster, write better storytelling, and find their way to success. Her most recent nonfiction book, *Write Better, Faster*, has earned raving reviews from the independent publishing community for going deeper than anyone else into the topic of writing speed.

Before becoming an independent author, Monica led digital marketing efforts at Inc. 100 companies like Hansen's Natural and Braintree. She's been an avid blogger of marketing and business trends since 2007. Her ideas have been featured in AdAge, The Huffington Post, the AMEX OpenForum, GigaOm, Mashable, Social Media Today, and the Christian Science Monitor. In 2009, she was named one of the top 25 Tweeters in the city of Chicago by ChicagoNow, a subsidiary of the Chicago Tribune. Monica, what a pleasure it is to have you on the show. Welcome, and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Monica Leonelle: Thank you so much for having me. This is really exciting.

Susan Friedmann: So, Monica, something that really peaked my interest, so I'm going to start off on a very selfish note, and that is your speed-writing. And since you're such an expert in this, give us some tips on what that means, and how can we speed up our writing efforts?

Monica Leonelle: Back in 2012, I realized that if I wanted to make a career as an author and make more money off of my books, I needed to be able to write more books, and so I did a 60-day experiment or challenge or trial, however you want to call it, and I tried to systematically increase my writing speed. And so, during that time, I was able to go from about 900

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words per hour all the way up to over 3,500 words per hour. What it came down to was just a few changes, basically, to my writing routine. These are changes that everybody can make.

The first one is that you have to know what you are writing before you write it. So before I would write a chapter or a scene, or whatever, I would do not just an outline, but I would do bullet points of what I wanted to say, almost like paragraph by paragraph of ... And I had a bullet point for every, I don't know, paragraph or section, or every 500 words, or whatever you want to call it. It's loose how you want to categorize it. But so I would do that, and what I found from that, I went from, again, 900 words per hour up to over 1,600 words per hour, just from that change. So that was number one.

The second one was that I started doing timed writing sessions, and with these, I used a productivity method called the Pomodoro method. This is 25 minutes of focused attention, and then a five-minute break, and if you do it four times, then you have a Pomodoro session. So I started implementing this in my writing routine, and again, if you do four of these, you're only doing two hours of writing a day, but you can also just do one of them if you want, so if you have a half hour, you could do one of these timed sessions.

So I would do my 25 minutes, and what I found was just that 25 minutes of focus and five minutes of break, that also jumped my word count again, and so I was over 2,000 words per hour at that point, so this was more than double from where I started. This is something that anybody can do, of course. You just get a timer on your computer, or you can use the timer on your phone, or you can get a little egg timer to try this, but it's something really cool that you can try in less than 30 minutes. A large chunk of people, doing the timed session, that alone will double your writing speed for most people.

And then the third thing I did is I really wanted to take my speed to the next level, so I started learning dictation, and dictation is something that some writers, they really love it, they embrace it, and some are like, "Oh, I don't know, I don't want to speak out loud and have my words transcribed." And so what I did is I just got one of the free apps on my phone. The company that is really the industry leader right now is Nuance, product line is Dragon. So for Windows, it's Dragon NaturallySpeaking; for Mac, it's Dragon Dictate. But they have a free app, and you can download it to your phone, and you can try it.

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And so that's what I did, and I found that because you can speak so much faster than you can type, for most people ... So on average, the speaking speed is about 150 words per hour, and the typing speed, on average, is about 60 to 70 words per minute, so speaking speed, on average, is double what typing speed is. And so I tried it out, and I was getting tons and tons of words in just a few short minutes. So, typically, I think I was getting between 250 to 500 words in eight minutes, so I started using that, and that's how I was able to get consistently over 3,000 words per hour. Typically, I would be around 3,500 words per hour with that.

Susan Friedmann: So I think one of the things that you said early on was that you already know what you're going to write about before you actually sit down and write this massive speed-writing effort.

Monica Leonelle: Absolutely.

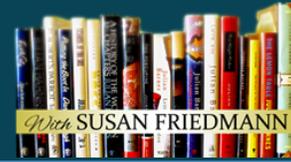
Susan Friedmann: I know that you're an avid blogger as well, Monica, and you use your blogs, I believe, to promote your books. How do you do that?

Monica Leonelle: When *Write Better, Faster* came out — this was in March of 2015 — what I did to promote that book ... I mean, it had probably, definitely over 500, maybe over 1,000 sales in the first month or two for that book. So one thing was that it was just a really timely topic, and nobody had really written about it up until then. The book is about the writing speed that I just talked about, so if you're curious about more of that, then you can read about my experiment in that. But with *Write Better, Faster*, I wanted to promote it to the writing community, and I didn't really have an audience in the writing community.

What I was able to do is I pulled out some of the frameworks from my book. For example, one of the things I just talked about was my step one, which is that you've got to know what you write before you write it. And so I pulled out that framework as an example, and I picked something very popular. You can do this yourself, pick something popular in the media, so it could be, like, *Sex and the City*, it's a really popular TV show. It could be *Game of Thrones*. So what I ended up picking was *Harry Potter*, and I decided to use that framework of how do you outline your book in more detail before you write it, and use that framework, but then I decided to use these *Harry Potter* examples in the blog post.

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This blog post did very well. I did it as a guest post, so that's another thing that I always recommend, is why put it on your own website when you could put it on a website with way more traffic than your website has? So I put it on another website called The Write Life. It's a pretty popular site for writers, freelancers, authors, and the post ended up doing over ... It was, like, over 200 comments, and a ton of shares. I don't have all the stats with me, but basically, it was very successful, and a big part of that was the Harry Potter examples that I was giving in the post. And I made it kind of cheeky and funny, and so that was part of it, and then gave the information. And so then, at the end of that post, it was like, "Oh, well, if you want to learn more about this, then you can get my book, Write Better, Faster," and a lot of people did. So the blog post sold hundreds of copies of the book, and those initial sales, then people were talking about it as well.

Susan Friedmann: I love that idea. I think that's good, and I know that many of my other guests have promoted the idea of guest blogging as being such a powerful way to get your message out to people, so congratulations on that. So, Monica, something that you have mentioned in your books is the 10 stages of audience. Talk to us about that. What does that mean? And maybe you can share some of those 10 stages with us.

Monica Leonelle: So I have a book series called the Growth Hacking for Storytellers series. That series has seven books now. The seventh book in it, which came out at the end of June, is called Get Your Book Selling, and so it's a lot of book marketing stuff, and that's where the 10 stages of audience is featured. Basically, what the 10 stages is it breaks down where your potential reader is at any given point. So it starts with them being a complete stranger to you. They've never even heard of you, they don't know who you are, but they read books like yours, and they just haven't heard of you. And so then, we think about that reader, so basically, it's just like a target audience reader. We think about that reader, and we think, "What does that person need to move to the next stage of audience?"

The second stage of audience is somebody who's a lead, so it's somebody who has heard about your books, who knows who you are. They're not necessarily going to buy your books yet, because ... But they've at least heard about your book, or your name, or something. If you look at those two different stages of audience, what does it take to get somebody from "stranger" to "has heard of you"? And whatever that is, it's called your marketing materials. And so then you just put those in place. It's kind of like a checklist. You put those in place, and then that person moves to the next stage.

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And so there are these 10 different stages, and I'll just read them off quickly. The first one is the target audience; it's somebody who reads books like yours, but hasn't heard of you. Second one is the lead. They've heard of your books, but they're not thinking about buying them, they've just heard of them. Third is the prospective reader, so they read books like yours, and they're thinking about trying yours, but they just haven't gotten to it yet. Then is the trial reader. This is somebody who has somehow encountered your work, and has consumed it, and has gotten value from it. So this is where stuff like sending out review copies, or having a sample chapter download, or having a different freebie ... It could be anything. So, like, a podcast interview, that is a trial. So anybody listening here, you're trialing some of the content in one of my books. They have to have experienced your work and had a good experience with it, kind of for obvious reasons: if they don't, then they're not going to want to buy your book.

Then, the fifth stage is the prospective buyer, so this is somebody who's at a buying decision. As you can see already, it does take a lot of work to get somebody to this place, and I think a lot of people, they kind of skip these first four steps, and they're like, "Here's my sales page." Like, "Buy my book." And that, of course, is not very effective book marketing, and most of us know that. But at the same time, it's something that many of us do kind of accidentally, so we're skipping all these other stages. So this is like somebody who's at your product page, or they have your book in front of them, and they're trying to decide, like, "Am I going to read this or not? Am I going to buy it or not?" And so that's where stuff like your book description, and your cover, and your reviews, and all that stuff is going to give them that information and help them make that buying decision.

Then, you finally get to the sixth stage, which is they bought the book. So many of us kind of stop before that. We're like, "Okay, I got the book sale, woohoo!" But actually, there's five more stages that they can go through, and so something I always say is, just because somebody buys your book doesn't mean they read it, and it's really important to get them to read your book. It's not like you just got the sale, and then that's it. And the problem with not reading the book is, if they don't read the book, they can't become a fan, and being a fan is, like, they've joined your email list, they're waiting for your next book, they're reading your blog posts, whatever else it might be. And then, if they don't do that, they can't become a true fan. A true fan is somebody who will buy anything that you put out. They're basically like a repeat customer.

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And then the last stage is the evangelist. This is somebody who has read your book, loved it, and they're out sharing this with their friends. And so many of us, we don't get our book to the evangelist stage, and so that is truly a sales killer. Basically, it's really important to lay out these 10 stages, know what they are. Once you have the 10 stages laid out, it really just becomes a checklist, and so many people, they get really in their heads about book marketing, and they're like, "I don't get how to do it, I don't know what to do," but once you have the checklist, it's really just like, "Okay, stage one needs this marketing to get to stage two, and stage two needs this marketing to get to stage three," and so on. And so you make sure that all 10 of these stages have a little piece of marketing put in them, and then people are able to flow through the entire 10 stages.

Susan Friedmann: I love that. However, there's one point that I'm like, "How on earth do you do that?" And that is, how do you make somebody read your book?

Monica Leonelle: It's a good question, but I think a lot of it has to do with urgency. Think of what makes you read a book. What makes you actually read it? So one, it's super interesting in the first chapter, so this is where your writing chops are going to come into place, is that you've got to hook readers from the beginning, and every single chapter, you've got to keep delivering more and more value, and just getting people through the book, chapter by chapter, step by step. But also, so many of us, we buy a book, and then we forget about it, especially in the eBook age. But a lot of times, what happens for me, anyway, is I'll hear that recommendation from someone else, and I'll be like, "Yeah, I got that book, I've been meaning to read it." And if somebody is like, "You have to read it, it's so critical, and this solves your problem," then I'm really likely to read it.

And so, again, a lot of it comes from having that evangelist word of mouth, basically, and you've got to have that. That's why I said, if you don't get your readers to the 10th stage, then it can be a book sales killer, because then nobody's talking about the book, and then nobody's recommending the book, and then nobody's buying the book. Even though it's laid out as like a sales funnel, or like a straight line, starting at step one, ending at step 10, it's actually more of a circle, because those evangelists, they'll start to turn strangers to leads, and they'll start to turn buyers to readers, and they'll start to turn readers to fans, and so on. It's a critical piece of your book marketing.

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Susan Friedmann: Yeah, you need ... I call them "foot soldiers," but the evangelists, you're right, you need those people to help you, because you can't do it all yourself, but as you say, it's almost like a double-edged sword, because you've got to find those people before they can do the work for you. We talked earlier about mindset. Share with us your thoughts on a marketing mindset.

Monica Leonelle: The first thing I hear is just that most people feel like they're just not good at marketing, and what I want to share with you is that marketing is just a skillset that you can learn at any time. It's like anything else, so sometimes, we think, "Oh, marketing, it's like there's this secret world of marketing," but what I just taught you about the 10 stages of audience, for example, that's something that you can actually do. You can go through, we have a little worksheet that you can go through, and you can go through, and you can just come up with, "Here's what this person needs to move to this next stage."

And another thing is that people often say, "I don't want to be spammy or scammy, or sending out my book link to people, so marketing just makes me feel icky." And so to that, I would say that when you have something like the 10 stages of audience, or any other framework, you can pick things that feel good to you, in terms of your marketing. So, marketing strategy, there's only about 15 different strategies out there to market your book. I mean, we can't get into that. I talk about them in *Get Your Book Selling*. So there are only 15 strategies; there are probably, like, hundreds and hundreds of tactics that you can use. And so many people focus on those tactics, instead of saying, "What's my strategy? Where are people at in my 10 stages of audience? What can I put at each stage that feels good to me, and that makes me feel confident, that will move people to the next stage?"

That's another piece of it, is just ... You don't have to be spammy or scammy book marketer if you don't want to be. You have the choice to be in integrity, which brings me to the third thing, which is that so many authors feel like they are not good enough at some level. Their writing's not good enough, or they don't have enough awards, or they haven't won enough contests, or somebody else's book is better, or whatever it might be. And this holds them back from marketing. It's all under the same bubble of "I'm not good enough," though.

The thing that shifted everything for me on book marketing was to shift out of this "I'm not good enough" to "How can I add value to the world?" It's kind of an interesting and surprising shift for so many

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people, because if you start to look at, like, "How can I add value to the world?" you're moving out of your own fears and your own ego, really. Because saying you're not good enough, as strange as it is, that's actually about your ego, because you're saying, like, the way that you feel and your own fears are more important than the people that you could help with your book, or with your message, or with your story. And so you're not thinking about your readers; you're thinking about yourself, just everything that you're feeling, and putting that as a higher priority than what your readers need and what your readers are feeling.

So if you shift to the value, then you realize, "Okay, how can I add value with this book? Well, I've got to get it into the hands of the readers who need it." An analogy that a lot of people say, and you hear it everywhere, is "If you had the cure for cancer, would you be afraid to market it?" And of course you wouldn't. You would market it like crazy; you would want to share that with people. Well, I'm assuming that your story or your message that's in your book, you felt the same way about that, and so you've got to think about the reader, and put your discomfort with marketing aside, and just think about, "How can I get my book into readers' hands, readers who need this book?"

Susan Friedmann:

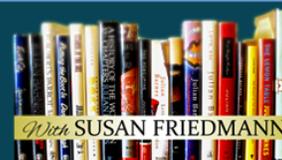
I love that. That is so, so critical, and I ... What you said before, the whole idea of being more you-centric rather than reader-centric, is also so important, is that we do, we tend to think about ourselves much more than, as you say, what value can we bring to the world with our message. So, Monica, I know that many of our listeners are itching to learn more about how they can find out about your services. Share that information with us, if you would, please.

Monica Leonelle:

I am at theworldneedsyourbook.com, and so what we do there is we're really just trying to share that message that I basically just shared, is you have something important to say, you have an important story, you have an important message, and you've got to get it out into the world, and not ... To kind of shift the thought from not just for yourself, though your dreams are important, though supporting your family is important, your goals are important, all of that's incredibly important, but how can we shift that to, like, how can you make an impact on the world, on your readers, and improve their lives as well? And so what we do is we really try to put that at the forefront, so that you can get past some of the mindset stuff. The focus inward can sometimes hold you back on both the writing side and the marketing side, and the publishing side, so that can be a mindset piece that really can halt your progress on so many levels. So we just try to flip the switch on that.

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The other thing we focus on is, this is the message that's in your heart, so this is what you want to say. Don't try to fit that into what's popular right now in books, which so many people do. So many people say, "Oh, well, Eat, Pray, Love was an amazing memoir, and super popular, so I'm going to write a memoir like Eat, Pray, Love." And so what we're saying is, "No, don't do that. Instead, take the message and the story that you want to share, and that you think is important, and let's use marketing and business principles, and we can build a business around that." We don't have to change our own desire or our own story to make money, and so it's really also a shift away from ... I don't want to say "writing to market"; I think writing to market is important, but it's just, let's prioritize the message and story you want to share, and we'll figure out all the business models, and all the marketing pieces. We can figure out all that stuff, but let's have the message and the story be the priority.

So again, that's at theworldneedsyourbook.com, and you can just sign up for the email list, and we share what we're up to, and videos, and webinars, and that sort of thing on there.

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

Monica Leonelle: I think what's so important to hear is that you are good enough, and you are ready to do this. So if you're working on your first book, or maybe you have your book done, or maybe you even have multiple books done, but you need to increase your marketing around those, it's so important to just move forward with it, and just know that you're good enough, you can have the confidence to do this, any challenges you're having are solvable. Just, instead of worrying about how it's going to happen, just commit to getting the help that you need for it.

Susan Friedmann: Great wisdom, thank you. 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.