

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



## BOOK MARKETING: How to Do Good and Build a Speaking Career Interview with Coach Jim Johnson

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 motivational and inspirational speaker. Jim Johnson is first and foremost a high school basketball coach, but a few inspiring moments on an evening in 2006 has led to a secondary career as a motivational speaker with a team-building message that resonates with business and civic organizations around the country. His kind-hearted gesture of giving an autistic student, now affectionately known as J-Mac, on his team, the chance to make his dream come true captivated the hearts of millions of Americans.

With the help of his teammates, J-Mac scored 20 points in just over four minutes, becoming an instant national celebrity. J-Mac's magical moment won the Best Sports Moment Award at ESPN's Award Ceremony later that year and has also inspired NBA legend, Magic Johnson, to visit the school. Following that memorable evening, Jim was named Coach of the Year by several local area organizations and was also presented with a National Sportsmanship Award. He's been featured in major news outlets around the country, making a number of radio and television appearances, including the Oprah Winfrey and Jim Rome shows.

He's the author of the bestselling book, *A Coach and a Miracle*. He's also one of my favorite National Speaker Association colleagues. Jim, what a pleasure it is to welcome you to the show, and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Jim Johnson: My pleasure, Susan. It's great to be with you.

Susan: Jim, little did you know that a small gesture of kindness would open up a whole new world of opportunities. You've probably told this story a hundred, if not thousands of times, but can you briefly take us through

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



what happened on that special night in 2006 that completely changed your life?

Jim Johnson:

I had a young man Jason McElwain, that the world now knows as J-Mac, and he's autistic and learning disabled. What happened is he tried out for our basketball team three consecutive years, and didn't make it, but he was so into basketball and was so passionate, he was our team manager. His senior year, when he came out and didn't make the team, I told him that, because he was so loyal and committed to our program, I wanted to give him a gift. The gift was I was going to put him in uniform for our final home game, which we call Senior Night, and hopefully get him in the game.

With just over four minutes left in that game, I decided the time is right. I put him in. He nearly ran the court, he was so excited. Then I was taken back in a positive way, but certainly a heartwarming way, when I saw the student body, that was in the stands, give him a standing ovation. What Jason and I didn't know is one of our parents had made these placards of Jason's face, and they showed them when he came in. I'm normally a macho guy, when I coach, but I wasn't that night. I sat down, when I saw those placards, and started to cry. I was so touched.

Well, the game begins, and the first time Jason touches the ball in a varsity basketball game, he lets a three-pointer go from the right corner. It misses by like six feet, and I know that you're not supposed to pray in the public schools, but I was praying hard, "Please, God, please help him just get one basket." Well, on the second possession, he missed a much shorter shot, but it hit the rim this time, so I'm thinking, all right, we're getting closer. Then, his third possession, he made a three-pointer, and I thought, oh my gosh, God must be a basketball fan. Not only has Jason scored, he's got a three-pointer. It can't get any better than this, right?

Well, wrong. For the next three minutes, Jason turned into his boyhood idol, Kobe Bryant, and he started making shot after shot, and when the smoke had cleared, he made a shot at the buzzer, a long three-pointer, and the place erupted. I felt like I was in the movie "Rudy" because I saw all the players and spectators run on the floor, and they put Jason up on their shoulders. When the smoke had cleared, our public address announcer came on and said, "The leading scorer for the Trojans tonight ... J-Mac with 20 points."

I'm thinking, oh my gosh, if he had played the whole game, he would've scored 160 points. It was a moment in my career that I'll cherish for the

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



rest of my life. It was just such an amazing thing that happened. To see how everybody supported this young man touches my heart still to this day, and always will.

Susan: That's such an incredible story and so moving. I know, I've heard you tell this several times, and each time you tell it, the same thing is I also have that feeling of, oh my goodness. It would have been wonderful to be a fly on the wall there. Jim, from there you decided to write a book. What was the impetus to write that book, and then, what have you learned from actually writing the book, the good, the bad, and the ugly? Take us through that.

Jim Johnson: Initially, it launched me into a speaking career, so I started to speak and I started to like that. Then, I actually joined the National Speakers Association, because somebody in one of my audiences said, "You should join the National Speakers Association." Of course, I didn't know anything about what that was. When I joined, it helped me immensely, and I started to learn from other speakers that happened to be authors. I had various people in my community say, "You've got to write a book about this." I started thinking and, ironically, I had a couple people ask if they could co-author.

I ended up choosing a gentleman that I went to school with that was a newspaper writer. Him and I ... Ironically, he had two sons, who were on the autism spectrum, so the J-Mac story touched him deeply. We started on our journey, and I will say this, for first-time authors like myself, we did very quickly ... We tried to get a regular publishing deal, because the story was so big, but I will forewarn that I think doing a book, self-published, is nothing wrong with it, and a lot of people are doing it. In most cases, it's a better way, because it's a very big struggle.

We did get an agent, and we thought we were golden, and we still did not get a big publishing deal. We ended up ... I'm not going to get into the story, but we had a small publisher ended up doing the book for us. The things I've learned is that, I thought, because the story is so good and the fact that I really believe our book is an outstanding product--it's written as a life lesson, so it's evergreen, despite the fact that it is based on the story that I was part of--is that the huge error that I made is I didn't realize ... I've kidded with people, because I've had people approach me about wanting to write their own book.

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



I truly believe we all have their own story, and writing a book is a nice thing, but I'll ask them, "Do you have a marketing plan?" Most of them look at me like I have two heads.

Then I usually get something like, "Well, I don't really care if the book sells."

I'm like, "Are you sure?" because usually you write a book, you'd like to ... I'd rather have it sell, as opposed to not sell. One of the huge things is, as simple as it is, is start to figure out, as you write a book ... My first recommendation is, whether you have a co-author or you do it by yourself, is that you put a plan together as far as the format of the book, an outline of the book, on what you want to do. Secondly is how are you going to sell this book? What's your audience?

For me, it's an inspirational, life lessons book, so a lot of people can use it, but I think you've really got to narrow down and start with a smaller market. Maybe you want to do it, in my case, to the coaching market and the athlete market. It could be other things. If you're writing a book on how you can improve your life as a senior citizen, obviously your market's going to be to senior citizens and maybe sons and daughters of senior citizens. Start to think about how you can narrow your market down and really hit that hard.

Then, the other thing is ... These are all things I learned. When I came out with my book in 2011, I did not really have a list or what some people call a herd or a following, and that's something you've really got to think about is how can you establish a following? Hopefully, you're already doing that in whatever business, that you have friends, family, and people that follow you for whatever you're an expert in. Really start to reach out to your contacts. A few things ... One is you certainly want to get some people that'll give you testimonials for your book.

Now, if you've got people that are famous in the world, yes, that can be helpful. I will say, I've got some pretty famous people that gave me testimonials on my book. The other thing is, the huge thing, is can you get some people that maybe have a big list or a big following that will help support you in your endeavor. Maybe they'll send an email to all their list [inaudible 00:09:42] your book. The other thing is that you really should organize of how you're going to launch the book, and then build it up, contacting your list, trying to spread your list. Maybe you can get a sponsor. That's a whole different ballgame, I'm not going to delve

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



into in this talk, but it really is start to figure out on how you can start to reach out and build a launch date, so that people are aware.

Then, when you do a launch date, a couple things to think about is the launch date. Something like my book was based on a basketball story, so maybe a good launch date for me would have been at the start of the basketball season or during the March madness, the NCAA Tournament. Those would just be a couple examples of when my book might have been a good idea to come out at that time, because it has some significance along with what the story's about.

That's what you've got to figure out in your book is when would be a good time to bring it out in accordance of what you wrote about. Then, you can start giving bonuses, like if you buy my book in the next two weeks, maybe we'll give you free shipping, or I'll give you a free report, or it could be buy two for the price of one. I mean, there's a lot of different ideas that you can motivate people to buy the book in a certain period of time, because that is a way--I wish I would've learned this earlier--it's a way that you could become an Amazon bestseller or something by ... If you have a launch date, when you have a short period of time, and a lot of people buy your book at that certain time, that will raise your score in Amazon or some area that you may be wanting to try to do that.

That huge thing is that there's a lot that goes into marketing your book. You've really got to start thinking about, who can assist me and do that, how can you provide value to them, so they're willing to assist you? Certainly, if it's your mom and dad, they're probably willing to do it, but if they're people that are maybe following you on your list, you've got to have some incentive of why they would help you.

Susan: You've also brought out a 10-year anniversary edition of the book, so that tells me that this book has longevity, but what was the impetus for actually doing that?

Jim Johnson: Again, I wanted to create a little bit of a splash, and we did get some media attention, because the story was very big. When we did a 10-year anniversary, we based it around a big fundraiser that we did for autism, which is a whole other topic we might get a little bit into. It was a way that I could bring out an updated copy of what was happening with myself and Jason since that event. We added some new pictures, because we retired Jason's number. We put it in paperback. It was a

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



little bit cheaper that way. It was another way that we could ignite some excitement and that kind of thing.

Because the book was written as a life lessons book, it was evergreen, so the fact that the story is obviously older, people could still gain a lot from doing that. I think, for my profession, and certainly there's a lot of professions, by having a book and then updating it, it really gives you some credibility. I know, as a speaker, it's a real good credibility piece. They call it a big business card to have a book you can use in various ways. Not only do you want to sell it--you could sell it in the back of a room--but it's also a way that you can connect with people. You might give them a complimentary book or a thank you. There's a lot of different ways you can use the book to enhance what you're doing, besides just selling it.

Susan: It's a natural fit for you to support fundraising for autism, but how has that helped your career? Then, what recommendations would you have for our listeners maybe to team up with a nonprofit organization?

Jim Johnson: The number one thing is it's just the right thing to do. I think all of us should figure out an area or an organization that you can support. Certainly, you can do multiple things. Because Jason is autistic, and I'm so close to him, it was a natural fit to work with autism organization. I support a local autism [inaudible 00:14:07], called AutismUp in Rochester. It was a group of mothers that had all young children that were on the autism spectrum, and Jason and I love the organization, and it was a way you can recognize it.

I think it's a win-win, because it gives you some publicity because you're doing a good thing, but I think the bottom line is it's just good for your heart. It's a way that you can give back to people, a simple thing, but we sometimes forget that it's the best way to do things in the world. If you want something coming back to you, it starts with you giving first, and giving value to others.

Susan: How about mistakes that you've made along the way in this 10-year-plus journey in your speaking career? Given the chance, what would you do differently?

Jim Johnson: I'll give you two points that jump out right at ... Number one is that there was a number of talks over the last decade, especially in my first five years, when I was teaching, coaching, and speaking, so I was just speaking part-time. I started to get better at it. I really fell in love and I

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



became very passionate about it, but I had no thought process of ... Wow, I just went out and did a really good job for a school or a business or association, whatever I spoke for, and yet I really had no process of following up. Now, I'm much better than that. I always send a gift card and a thank you note. I always have a followup call with the client, try to provide value after my talk, whether it's sending my newsletter or maybe doing a video for them. There's a lot of different ways you can do that. Then, getting them so you can stay connected with them, because you never know, down the road.

That was a really big mistake that I did. For example, I just spoke to Franklin-Covey, and I get a standing ovation for two minutes at the end, and I just didn't do a good job. I still stay in touch with them a little bit, but it was back when I was doing all those things. I know it's an excuse, but something I really learned.

Then, the second thing is, if you're doing speaking, like any profession, is you've got to be consistently getting a plan on how you're going to market yourself. I know social media has gotten really big. I laugh, because five years ago, when people said, "Jim, you've got to get on Twitter. You've got to get on Facebook," and I'm like, "Ah, I really don't want to." Well, I really clarified my mind. If I'm going to be a speaker, I have to be on social media. Now, I've learned a lot about it.

You really have to study about your profession and what are some significant ways that you can consistently market yourself. You just have to keep your name out there, and people are aware that you can add value to them, but those are a couple of big things. I just didn't have any followup system, at first. Then, number two was then really starting the ... because the story is now over 10 years old, so you've got to be constantly ... I really believe, when I work with people, that they know I'm more than just putting a young man into a game. There's a lot of things that I can offer people, because of my success as a leader. People often aren't aware of that. They might have heard of the story, but they don't know more, so that's why the marketing piece is really important, that you're consistent in staying with that, day in and day out.

Susan: For you, you talk about marketing and your speaking business, what are some of the major things that you do currently to market your speaking?

Jim Johnson: Again, I think it's starting to build a list. I've done a better job with that. Every place that I go, I always try to get people to sign up for my

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



newsletter. I have over 600 subscribers, which isn't huge, but it's definitely a start. I have a little team of people, so we're building a list. Some of the things I do is I do a monthly newsletter, so I'm staying in touch that way.

Number two is that also, on people that are not part of my monthly newsletter, but are on one of my other lists, I will often connect with them by sending my newsletter. It's a nice way to stay connected with them. I do a weekly blog, and that's another way that I will not only get out to my social media. Also, that I will connect with people by sending a blog that might be pertinent.

Another thing is just trying to find different ways that you can stay connected to the people that are in your herd or list or whatever you want to call it, whether it's sending them an article that might be a positive thing for them, and things that are built in now. I know I did this with my basketball program, but now if I have friends on LinkedIn or Facebook, they tell you when it's their birthday. Well, wish them a happy birthday. Stay connected with them. If you show that you care about them, that'll come back to you.

The main thing is you have to be consistent with the things you do. Another thing I do ... I'm an avid reader. Here, we're talking about books. I've read over a thousand books in my life. I do a weekly book recommendation every Wednesday. It goes out on all of my social media.

Susan: Jim, what else would you recommend, with regard to book marketing?

Jim Johnson: I think the huge thing with the book marketing is that when, once you get a launch date and you bring the book out, then the next thing is part of that process of the launch date is you should be reaching out to local, and sometimes ... My story was a global story that I was blessed to be part of, so I've tried to reach out to some national TV organizations. When you do that, especially at least start with your local ... It might be sending the local newspaper a copy of the book, and maybe they'll do an article. That was one of the things we did. We sent a lot of the radio stations a copy of the book and shared that it's going to be coming out there, if you'd like to have Coach on your radio show.

I ended up going on quite a few different shows. Now, in both for speaking and as an author, there's a lot of blog shows that it's great to be on. A lot of people are doing these blog radio shows, where they

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



have a big following, and I still do a decent amount of those throughout the year, promoting my speaking and trying to share ideas to add value to the audience of that particular blog radio. Certainly, getting on TV ... The only other thing is I think it's hugely important that you understand what is your budget? Some people have a very big budget to market their book. Some do not, and so you've got to be creative if you don't have a lot of money.

I know, when I brought my book out, I didn't have a big budget, so I had to be very creative and frugal with what I spent my money on. Those are things that you have to figure out. Then, it's just consistently, in a positive way, keeping ... For example, in my case I was a speaker. You might be a salesperson. Well, if you come out with a book, send people that you worked with a complimentary copy of your book, just ways that you can connect people with using your book, and it helps as a marketing tool, as well.

Susan: I know that you're a local celebrity. So many of our listeners avoid or even forget the fact that local publicity is dynamite. What would you have to say on that?

Jim Johnson: Oh, I think it's hugely important. I think it's really important that you stay connected to your local media. I mean, I have cellphones of the local media, and I stay in touch with them. A lot of them, I've connected with on social media. If I see it's their birthday, if I have their actual phone number, I'll text them a happy birthday. I think it's really important.

It's like anything in the world, but it's build a relationship with those people. Just don't go on their show and then forget about them. I think that's a huge thing. Stay connected with them. Try to figure out different ways that you can stay and be able to add value to them, because then they'll reach out to you for other cases. If you're an expert in certain areas and you stay connected with them, your names going to rise to the top if they need you for a show or for an article in a magazine or newspaper or whatever it happens to be.

Susan: I think that point is dynamite, because you're absolutely right, because they are always looking for experts, who they can call on at a moment's notice, and if they have you as top of mind, hey, you're the one they're going to call. Talking about contacting, Jim, how can our listeners contact you, find out more about how to get a copy of the book, find

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

*Helping authors get their books noticed!*



out more about your particular services, your speaking? Share that with us, please.

Jim Johnson: The best is to connect with me on my website. It's coachjimjohnson.com. Just that way I wouldn't forget it, coachjimjohnson.com. I do have a lady--her name is Kate Holgate--that's my manager. Between Kate and myself, we'd be glad to support you, whether it would be a copy of the book or if you'd like to bring me in for speaking or be part of a show for you or whatever. We like to try to help people in many various ways. We'd love to stay connected to your followers.

Susan: Fantastic, and if you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be, Jim?

Jim Johnson: I'll say two things. I think one is that I've really learned this so much. It's been part of my life, but J-Mac really reinforced it, and that's the power of perseverance, that it's a challenge every day to have success in your life. I've studied a lot of successful people, and that's the thing that keeps coming back to me. In fact, I just read a book called Grit, by Angela Duckworth, and it talks really about finding a passion in your life and how to persevere and stay with it. I think that's a huge thing.

Then, the second tip is that I think you really should always be trying to give more than you try to get. If you develop that philosophy, that I'm going to always try to create and add value to people, that's a pretty great way to go around in life, not with any ... The late, great John Wooden said ... One of my favorite quotes from him is that "you cannot live a perfect day, without doing something for somebody else without expecting anything in return." It's a pretty great philosophy to adopt.

Susan: It's a wonderful philosophy to adopt. Thank you, and 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 sparked some ideas to sell more book.