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BOOK MARKETING: How to Effectively Use Networking to Market Your Book Interview with Robbie Samuels

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 networking expert. Robbie Samuels has been recognized as a networking expert by Inc and Lifehacker, and has been profiled in Stand Out: How to Find Your Breakthrough Idea and Build a Following Around it by Dorie Clark. He's the author of "Croissants and Bagels: Strategic, Effective and Inclusive Networking at Conferences." A professional member of the National Speakers Association. He's been speaking on the topic of exclusive networking for nearly a decade.

While practical and filled with easy to implement action steps his talks are most often described as dynamic, engaging, and funny. He shares fun big idea. Every day ideas which are accessible and immediately actionable, and have the power to inspire significant change. Also tune in to On the Schmooze. His weekly podcast on leadership and networking to be inspired by the talented professionals he interviews. Robbie I always love interviewing my National Speaker Association colleagues as guests on the show. So welcome and thank you for being this weeks guest expert and mentor.

Robbie Samuels: Thank you so much for having me, Susan.

Susan Friedmann: So Robbie, "Croissants and Bagels." I absolutely adore the title of that book. I'm sure there's got to be a story behind it. Am I correct in thinking that.

Robbie Samuels: Absolutely. It's not your typical business book title. "Croissants vs. Bagels," is the most memorable and powerful concept from a talk that I've been doing for nearly a decade. That signature session is called "Art of the Schmooze." The concept is this, if you are standing at a networking event and you're looking around the room you see people standing in these tight networking circles. Those shoulder to shoulder huddles that are impossible to break in to. Those are the bagels. If one

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person inside that circle opens up their body language and makes space for others to join, that's the croissant.

Really I talk about intentionality. About being inclusive, strategic, effective and all the things you can do to make the most of the opportunities once you leave the house. The title of the book thus is, "Croissants and Bagels: Strategic, Effective and Inclusive Networking at Conferences."

Susan Friedmann: Fabulous. I love that concept. I've been very involved for many years in the trade show industry. I know those huddles. I've been to enough networking events and it's all the same people from the same company who all stand together and talk to each other. Never look to, as you say, network with anybody around them. Your recent book, the one we've been talking about, has been super successful in terms of the launch that you've done. I'd love you to share some of the strategies that you've used that have helped make it so successful.

Robbie Samuels: I'm really glad to share this. I was not someone who was drawn to writing. It's not something that comes easy to me. It's hard for me to sort of sit down and find that time. I was so glad to be done with the writing part of it. Then the editing part came. Then I was like, okay, now I have to do all the editing part. When we finally got to the marketing part that was familiar and comfortable for me. I've learned that's not true for most writers. It's usually the opposite. They're happy to write, not so happy to market. I love the concept of your podcast.

At first I actually had no desire to focus on Amazon and the metrics of success on Amazon. But then I realized if I'm going to write a book for my business ... right? I'm a professional speaker. A business card doesn't do it. You have to have a book as well. Probably two and three books. I thought well, why not make a best seller? Why not craft a book that is really actually very, very helpful. Then you've got to make sure people know about it. I decided I wanted a minimum of 100 reviews in the first few days of my launch. I'm actually a member of this self-publishing school which is through Chandler Bolt. Got a lot of insight into how to build a launch team from him and from his community. I did it in such a way that even they're impressed. It's sort of funny. They're like, "Wow. Your results are amazing." I'm like, "But you told me if I do all these things, this would happen."

But I think I added a few things. First of all my launch team was over 300 people. It was about 337 people. I made a landing page using Leadpages

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and I had people join through that link. They all went right to my email list and I can keep track of them. I also had a Google Form that people were directed to right after that where I asked them why they wanted to join and a little bit about their level of interest or level of energy and time to commit to it. Whether they had any special efforts. You went through that process. I'm kind of curious, from your perspective, what it was like to get that link and to sign up for my launch time.

Susan Friedmann: Well, I found it enormously professional. I just like ... oh my goodness. This is serious stuff. I was interested in how you did that. The fact that, as you say, it was very strategic. The people you picked to be on that launch team and then what you wanted from them to help you to be basically your foot soldiers.

Robbie Samuels: I'm going to give you a little behind the curtain. There was no one denied access to the launch team. I'll take everybody. It was a little bit of a litmus test. Having that little bit of a barrier, where the signing up and giving your email address, that was no big deal. But then 80% of the people filled up the Google Form. Not filling out the Google Form didn't mean you wouldn't get contacted. I still made sure that as you signed up you still got all my emails. But it gave me a sense of who might do more. Our fellow friend and colleague at NSA, Kathy [Fyok 00:06:17] was one of the people who signed up. She offered to help me do a virtual book launch. That offer came because she filled out the form and I saw her opportunity. I was like, "Oh. What does that mean?" So we did a webinar.

Little things like that came from it. I had a feeling, and it kind of bore out, that about a third of the people who signed up for my launch team would actually follow through with writing the review on Amazon. I needed 300 people, but I couldn't out of the gate say, "I wanted 300 people." Because that sounded kind of ridiculous. I said 100, then 200, then 300 as it kept growing. At the same time I was asking for reviews in advance. About 125 people submitted a review via email to me before the book was on Amazon at all. I was able to therefore track my progress towards that 100 reviews goal. Now the reason we weren't on Amazon yet. I wasn't done. But it gave me some sense like okay, most of the people who pre-write one will do this.

The reason I separated this: people get really anxious about writing reviews. It's not something many of us do often. Some people don't even do it for products. They just never do it. They think they have to read the entire book word for word, which isn't the case. I was trying to

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give them tips about that. But they wanted to like craft this message. I'm like it's two or three sentences. You can just bang this out. By separating that from posting it, which is the technological piece that some people got nervous about, it was able to be a two step process. It also increased their buy-in. They were part of this earlier on like weeks before the launch actually happened.

That particular tip of getting the reviews in advance, I think, proved very helpful.

Susan Friedmann: Now that you've got, I think, it was 150 something odd reviews. How do you feel that's helping you sell the book?

Robbie Samuels: It's about 160 some odd reviews worldwide. Because there's about 10 on other Amazon sites like Canada, Italy, UK. It's really cool. I think what happens is a couple of things. When the book launched ... it's still in Kindle. It will be out on paperback on September 12, which would be around the time this airs. This is only Kindle so far. We'll have a separate sort of mini launch around the actual paperback. I wanted the book to hit number one. Because there's just credibility attached to that.

I very carefully chose categorizes where I could be competitive. I did all the research to see where people ranked for paid Kindle. Chose categorizes that were a good fit, but were also not unrealistic for me to hit number one. I also was able to contact KDP, Kind Direct Publishing, and ask them to expand the category. It's weird because the categories that you see online, and the categories you see behind the scene, don't match up. I actually just gave them 10 categories that I wanted and told them to delete the ones that I had used as I published. They did that.

I hit number one in three categories. That helps everything. Because I think at one point my book was ranked about 7,200 on all Amazon paid Kindle. Which is extremely high. I mean, was better then I thought it would be. Then Amazon starts to actually promote the book. When you hit 100 reviews ... no one knows exactly how this works. It's algorithm. It's proprietary. But there's a sense that when you have a certain number of downloads and a certain number of reviews. That magic number might be 100. Then Amazon starts to push out your book for you. I know that my books shown up on the side bar, not paid advertising, just through Amazon saying, "Here's some new releases in this category you might be interested in." I also know ... people sent me screenshots of my book being emailed out to people, "You might want

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to check out this book." That's happening because of the number of downloads and the number of reviews.

Susan Friedmann: Talk to us about the categories, because I think that's very important. What did you suggest? First of all, what did you market the book under? Then what did you suggest to KDP?

Robbie Samuels: I'd have to pull it all up, but it was a mixture of Communications ... Etiquette was one because I talk about welcoming community. Entrepreneurship. There's a few different categories where Entrepreneurship was part of the title. Marketing. I guess Marketing and Sales was another category. But here's the thing you do. On the bottom of each book page there's a section where it tells you the books ranking in Kindle paid books. It'll be a number sign, like a pound sign or a hashtag sign, and then a series of numbers. Right below that are three categories that it's in. You only ever see three categories at a time, but it turns out you're allowed to have up to 10. You just go through the Contact Us page to change that.

The homework is that you got to the categories that you think you want to have your book in. If I hadn't known this ... like the categories I had originally chose blindly without doing any research were horrible categories for trying to get to number one. They were impossible because I was like, "Oh. I should be next to Tim Ferriss." That kind of thing. You're like, no. You're never going to win. It's really hard. I mean, it's not impossible for a moment but make it a little bit easier. If a book at number one is ranked 20,000 or below. So 20,000; 30,000; 40,000; 50,000; 100,000 whatever. Any number 20,000 below that's very competitive. That's a little easier. I don't say easily but it's much easier. If it's above 10,000. if it's 10,000; 9,000; 8,000; 7,000; 500. I mean there are books in some of the categories that I was looking at initially that were number 531 in all paid Kindle.

It's going to be really hard to compete with that. Those are categories you just kind of ... that's like a red category. That's not an easy one to do. Then in between is 10,000 to 20,000. That's sort of a middle ground. You look at the first three books in each of those categories in the top 100 list. The other thing you can look at is the 20th book. Because if you can get on the first page of the top 100 list that's pretty good. My book it got to number one in three categories. It's still in the top 20. I think it's for six categories right now. That's front page for six categories. I mean, it's number five, six and eight I think in some categories. It's doing really really well. Part of this is that I had a very strategic launches found

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having a free time period and then how I've increased the price over time.

Susan Friedmann: That's pretty impressive. Let's start talking about networking which is the topic of the book. I think over the years networking has, in my opinion, gotten a bad rep. Talk to us about sort of the negative connotations that might be attached to the word networking.

Robbie Samuels: We've all experienced people who kind of spam you by just slapping their business card in your hand, and have no interest in you. It's kind of sleazy. I don't know why people still try to sell this way. It's both in person. I've also seen the same things happen online. I don't blame people for having not great feelings about networking. But what they're missing is that networking isn't that. It's actually about building a relationships, about building community, about connection, about offering before you ask. Anybody who's really good at sales, they know that. You ask people who sell ... I had to interview somebody on my podcast who sells aviation private jets. She made her way through that business and now she teaches people how to do high ticket sales. She gets it. It's all about building relationships.

I think the same thing for authors. They have to really be thinking about how to build their platform before they launch their book. Doing a lot of offering. Because when you're launching a book you're doing a lot of asking. I mean it's going to be two weeks. I mean, you're on my launch team. I send an email every two or three days. That's a lot of asking. Part of my success is that I've offered a lot in the weeks, months and years before that. Some of that was in the Facebook groups that I was active in. I made sure I offered a lot of value before then asking for favors and, "Can you help me with my launch team?" Networking really should be about building relationships. That's the core message for the way I approach it.

Susan Friedmann: This isn't a quick in and out. You can't just build a relationship overnight. It takes time. Is that what you're saying?

Robbie Samuels: The reason I focused the book on conferences in particular is something a lot of us have experience doing. Logistically we show up. We've gotten the travel arrangements figured out but we haven't done any of the prep work before we go. At the end of the weekend we're like was that worth it? Depending on whether you're an introvert, so you're kind of exhausted. Or you're an extrovert and you're like high on the fact that you met all these people. But you still didn't walk away with anything

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tangible. You make any strong connections. It can start to feel like a waste of time. I think doing some prep work in advance. Getting clear about why you're going to the events you're going to. Thinking about the long term piece because if you are not doing the following up, if you don't have the plans and strategies in place to do the followup, then you're just collecting business cards.

I have to say, every listener right now, look around your desk at work or at home. You will find a stack of business cards. If you've left the house in the last year you have a stack of business cards and they're not serving you if they just stay in your desk. If you just collect business cards and go to another event and collect business cards like that's a cycle that I want you to break. I'd rather you go home and have a plan for how to actually follow through.

Susan Friedmann: You're making me feel really guilty.

Robbie Samuels: One of the emails I sent to my email list early on is I ask people to take pictures of the business cards on their desk and send them to me. It's been great. It's been a lot of fun. I want to do like a collage.

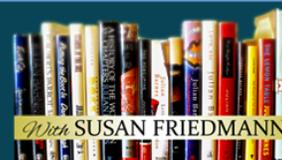
Susan Friedmann: I could send you a few. Networking as it relates to marketing a book. What would you suggest for our listeners. How they can utilize networking.

Robbie Samuels: A lot of people think about making a bookmark as part of their marketing material. Or some sort of palm card like a small little quarter sheet. I did a business card. Now it's a little on brand for me because I'm talking about networking. But it's also so much easier for me and the person I'm handing it to to keep track of. Because it's something they already know how to keep track of. I was able to have business cards on me at all times. When I went to the conference where I just saw you, the National Speakers Association conference, my book was not launched yet. But I had a card where one side had the book cover, the title, the picture of it and on the back it said how to join my launch team. It had a link to my landing page. It told them that if they joined they were going to get access to a free copy of the book and they were going to get the audio book when it came out. They were going to help me be a number one bestseller kind of thing.

It worked. People would take it and go home and actually act on it. I also made a card after the book came out. Same idea, but now the card tells you the books available on Amazon or at

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RobbieSamuels.com/bookstore. If you go to that link, the RobbieSamuels.com/bookstore, it doesn't bring you directly to Amazon. It actually brings you to a landing page where I say, "Hey. Before you go get it on Amazon do you want to opt in and get my free bonus bundle that comes with the Kindle? Which is 25 transcripts of networking tips and techniques for my 25 podcast episodes last year, and 25 leadership quotes." About a third of people have gone through and actually then joined my email list.

That's part of my message here. Your email list is so important. It will help you sell your second book, and your third book, and your fourth book. Even if you didn't start out with an email list, use your book. I've doubled my email list since the book launch. I didn't have a very strong email list. I was mostly using social media. But with this concerted effort of having a way for people to come into my website, opt into a lead magnet like ... it could be 10 tips or checklist or something. It could be a workbook related to your book. A guide. A map. Anything that gets people to feel like, "Oh yeah. That'd be a great resource." Once they're opt in then send them messages. Keep them updated. Tell them what you're working on, invite them, offer them things. Don't neglect that because it's an email list that you own. Everything else we're borrowing land on. Facebook and LinkedIn. But email lists is yours.

Susan Friedmann: A tactic. Many times people say when they're at an event they don't know how to start a conversation. Do you have some tips that you can share with our listeners on how would you start a conversation with a complete stranger at a networking event?

Robbie Samuels: The first thing I do when I got to an event is I walk in and I walk around, and I look for those croissants. I look to see if there's some open body language as people are gathering. What I want to avoid doing is going and standing on the edge of the room, or worse yet in the corner. Because it's much harder to meet people. If someone comes over and talks to you, and they don't know anyone, that's an even more awkward ending. Try to get into the middle of the room. You look for an opening. If you don't see an opening get in line for food. Get in line for a drink. Make eye contact with people as you're doing that activity together.

Just make some kind of upbeat observation about what's happening in front of you. Don't complain. It seems like an easy way in but there's not much more to the conversation once they agree with you. But if you say something upbeat they might then invite you to join them with their friends and colleagues that are sitting down somewhere else. The nice

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thing about getting in line is that people tend to not be in line with all of their friends. They're there by themselves. It's a lot easier to talk to people when they're not standing with all their friends.

the best opening line, for me, is "Hi, my name's Robbie." Use your own name, but that's it. It's pretty simple. Then maybe your affiliation. "I'm a board member," or something. I think we overthink it. A smile goes a long way in those kinds of moments.

Susan Friedmann: Then the opposite. How do you gracefully exit from a conversation? You realize that, yes this was nice but you don't want to stay with this person for any more time. What do you do to exit gracefully?

Robbie Samuels: The easiest way to do this is if you're still standing in a group with three or more people. If it's you and three other people let's say. You're not going to interrupt the conversation to shake hands and say goodbye to each person individually, right? You don't do that. You just sort of tap the person nearest you and you mumble something about, "Hey, I'm going to go," and then you walk away. That is the easiest way to exit.

If there's just two of you or let's say there's three of you. You don't have to make a decision because if someone else besides you walks away they'll only be two. When there's three people either you have to decide it's time to go. Sometimes you have to almost leave before it's time to go. Because you want to leave people wanting to talk to you further. That can actually be to your advantage. You might wave other people over to join your circle and make sure you're keeping that more of a cross-section so that people can join you.

But if it's just two people one method is you ask somebody if they can introduce you. If you're newer to the space you might say, "I don't really know that many people here. Is there anyone you think I should meet?" Then they'll brainstorm for a minute with you. Come up with a name. You're like, "Great! Would you introduce me?" People like being connectors. They don't have to know everybody in the room to be able to do this. I did this once at a conference with a college student and I hadn't been in college in 20 years. We were not peers. But he mentioned his intern supervisor and excitedly made that introduction happen, and walked away feeling really, really good about it. That's another method.

Last thing that I would say on this is it's three G's. Grip, Grin, and Go. If it's just the two of you and it's time. The Grip is the handshake. The Grin

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is you say something nice to sort of smooth out the moment. "Great to see you." "So glad you're here." "Great running into you." Then Go, which is you leave. Too often we interrupt this process. We shake hands, say something nice, remember something else we want to say, say that and then that social cue of a handshake at the end of a conversation's kind of broken. It's really up to us to make sure that we smoothly move through those three steps. Then you can always message people through any number of channels now if you think of something else after.

Susan Friedmann: That sounds very strategic. I love it. Robbie, if our listeners would like to get a hold of you, find out more about your services, the book, how can they do that?

Robbie Samuels: I do have something I wanted to share with your listeners. Which is 10 tips for conference connections. It's a three page guide purposefully written so that if you are walking into a conference and you have this on your phone you can just read through it very quickly and implement the ideas right away. You can find that at RobbieSamuels.com/BMM. RobbieSamuels.com is my website which is where you'll find my podcast, which is "On the Schmooze." You will also learn about all the things I'm working on in the world. One of the things I'm doing is I'm leveraging the book and I'm doing free Q and A webinars. I'm launching a pilot group coaching program all based on the content of the book. I love learning what people are challenged by and helping them figure out how to overcome those challenges.

Susan Friedmann: That's very generous. Thank you. Listeners, make sure that you grab a copy of that. If you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget, Robbie, what would that be?

Robbie Samuels: To write your followup email before you got to the event.

Susan Friedmann: That was very short, sweet, and concise.

Robbie Samuels: It's just that the process of doing that will make you think about, why this event? Why this particular event? Who are you trying to meet? Who's going to be there? You start doing that research. You start thinking about the possibilities. You start thinking about what you'd want to tell them. What you want to learn. What inspiration you're looking for. You get a lot of clarity and sense of purpose about going. You don't have to go to every event. Please don't go to every event. Be strategic about what events you're choosing. The second thing it does is

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if you have this written and you track business card you collect by putting them in that special pocket, or turning the corner of the cards that were particularly meaningful conversations took place.

If those two things happen you're 80% of the way done of actually sending the email afterwards. If you can just start doing that. Even if it's just three emails every time you go out and it's three meaningful conversations. Your professional network, your supportive community, is going to just amplify by you actually following through. Set yourself up for success. Spend less time and energy out just at random networking events. I want you to stop wasting time networking and start building great relationships.

Susan Friedmann: Fabulous. 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.