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BOOK MARKETING: How to Build Your Expert Identity with Content Marketing Interview with Bonnie Chomica

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 marketing communications specialist. Bonnie Chomica from Marketing Done Write is a freelance marketing communications specialist with over 25 years of marketing and writing experience, she helps to build her client's credibility using content marketing. By helping to make them look like the authority in their niche, her clients earn trust and expertise status, so people think of them when they're ready to buy. Bonnie lives on Vancouver Island of the West Coast of Canada and thrives in her organic fruit and vegetable garden. She's a dear friend and mastermind buddy. Bonnie, what a thrill it is to have you on the show. Welcome and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Bonnie Chomica: Hello, Susan. Thank you so much for having me. I'm very excited to be here.

Susan Friedmann: Well, wonderful, and all the way from the West Coast of Canada. We've had Canadians; we've had people in Switzerland; we've had people in Australia; we've ... the more around the place. Good to have somebody that's not too far away from us.

Bonnie Chomica: That's true. We're neighbors, but we're different.

Susan Friedmann: Yes. Bonnie, you recently published a fascinating article on content marketing, and I thought that it would make a really interesting topic for our listeners to better understand this buzz word and trend. Let's start off understanding exactly what is content marketing.

Bonnie Chomica: That's a great place to start. Content marketing, it's a type of strategy that involves the creation and sharing of high quality, valuable content that does not specifically promote your product or service. Instead, it's

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intended to showcase your knowledge in order to stimulate interest in learning more about your products and services. When you deliver really valuable, non-promotional content, you uniquely position your brand as an authority and a thought leader.

Susan Friedmann: I remember writing articles when I concentrated a lot in the trade show industry, and I really found how people saw me as an expert when they read these articles. I think that was before the whole term content marketing came alive. So it really is just articles, is that the case?

Bonnie Chomica: Not specifically. Articles are certainly one type of media that you can use. Blogging is very prominent these days, and although it's not essential, it is a really key form of content marketing. It's very highly effective. There's also things like newsletters and e-zines, even something like your podcast, your Book Marketing Mentors podcast. It not only shows your expertise, but it also shows the expertise of your guests. Case studies, success stories testimonials, people love real life stories, so those are great. There's webinars and training. I think one of the big things that maybe people don't realize is all the free downloads that you can online these days. There's eBooks and checklists and tip sheets and templates. People love these helpful tools. They're so handy and people eat them up.

Susan Friedmann: So that's all considered part of what we call content marketing. Is that correct?

Bonnie Chomica: That's right. Yeah, those are different vehicles of where you would put your content.

Susan Friedmann: Why do you feel it's important for offers to get involved with content marketing or to use content marketing?

Bonnie Chomica: If you think about all of the messages that come blasting at us, all day every day, people trust advertising less and less. If you're just trying to promote your book, it's just another advertisements for people to flip by, where content marketing is typically educational or even entertaining, so it provides more value, and is therefore more readily consumed. So good quality content keeps people reading. They stay on your website longer or they come back for more and they pay more attention to what it is you're writing.

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Susan Friedmann: You had mentioned earlier that it isn't promotional. So how does somebody find out more about, let's say, the writer if they're interested in more information?

Bonnie Chomica: That would depend on the vehicle, I guess, that you're using. Let's say you wrote a book called *From Puppy to Doghood* and your book likely includes tips on feeding, training, grooming, traveling, those types of things, so each piece that you would create for content marketing could focus on one topic. That allows you to showcase your knowledge and build your notoriety over the long-term. If you remember, people search online for answers. They're searching. They've got a question or a problem.

In this example, let's say I've got a puppy that's chewing my shoes, so I'm going to be searching for how to solve that problem. When I search and I find your tips or instructions on how to do that, I'll also see that you have other content with dog tips, oh, and they see you have a book, too. I should probably buy that book because I like what you've been sharing in your free content. That's simplified. I hope it explains the logic and psychology behind it. If it was a blog post, you could have a link to your book. In a video, same thing in the description of the video; you could point to your book. So even though you're providing that valuable content that's not promotional, it's still okay to have a subtle link that would go to your book.

Susan Friedmann: I always tell my authors that they're a published author now so they should let people know. I suppose in the byline, you would put that you're a published author of whatever the name of your book is; *From Puppy to Doghood*, as you said.

Bonnie Chomica: That's right.

Susan Friedmann: You talked about some of the content marketing vehicles. Can you tell us more about some of these different marketing vehicles?

Bonnie Chomica: There's not just online. That's most people think of, online content, when they use the term content marketing. But, really, as you mentioned about articles, content marketing has been around long before the internet. So depending on your business, you might use a different tactic. I don't know if you're familiar with Neil Patel, he's one of the big online marketers. He had a great post about content marketing and it was about offline marketing. Years ago, back in the '50s, I'm imagining that's when it started. There used to be soap operas

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and they started on the radio and then moved to television. Really, that was providing stories, which were not promotional yet there was an advertisement to sell soap later. They were capturing the attention of people and with that content that just kept you wanting to tune in to the next show, but in essence they were selling soap.

He had another great idea, which really was so interesting and it was about comic books. Think of Marvel comics. They've been around since the '50s. In 1980s, they created the GI Joe character and they issued about maybe just two or three comics, two or three stories. But that led to billion dollar sales in action figures so that the comic was the content that led to the product sale. That's just an offline example.

Another one, definitely lots of authors have speaking engagements, so that's a place to present a snippet of your book, or again, that knowledge base that you have. You can conduct workshops or training. Again, that's educational. It's valuable. We talked about articles. There's lots of print media, articles; you can be interviewed. I see lots of Ask the Expert features. Talk radio is another one. Depending on your business or industry, catalogs are an interesting place as well because it's not just a place to list products, but you can also have call-outs that describe how to do things. You know that I'm a gardener so we get seed catalogs. Sure, there's pretty pictures, but there's also helpful tips on how and when to plant those. That's valuable content. What that does is makes me look at that seed provider as an authority. They are giving me valuable information, so I learn to trust them.

Susan Friedmann: I think trust plays a really big part in all of these. What about managing all of these? Should you have a content marketing calendar? How does one go about all these different types of content marketing, what you should use, what's right for you? How do you determine that?

Bonnie Chomica: That's a really good question, because it's not just about putting one thing out there. With content marketing, it's a long-term strategy just like social media. It's long-term. The information that you put out there, most of it will be evergreen, meaning it's not just timely. It's something that someone can use all the time. So you do need to make some kind of a plan. Based on your expertise and your knowledge base, you need to map out some content ideas, things that solve people's problems because that's why they're searching. You can list out main topics and then just like mind mapping. Have a main topic and then what are subtopics that might be different. They're just opportunities to show your brilliance, and it does create trust. Absolutely.

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There's various formulas, but determine how that content that you're providing eventually positions people and leads them to a sale. People aren't always ready to buy when they're looking at your material, but if they see your information on a regular basis and they get to trust your brand, then when they are ready to buy, they are going to think of you. There's also deciding what platforms to use and how to use them. Certainly most of content marketing is online and that's going to bring in a technical side to doing this so that's what social media platforms are best for your content. Email service providers, graphics are very important. So whether you're using those tools yourself or you have an assistant that's helping, it's still useful for you to know and understand how those platforms work.

You mentioned a calendar. Absolutely, that's a great tool to keep you on track, and it depends on the person and objectives. But often people will have a theme. They'll have various themes. Maybe it's for a quarter or on a monthly basis. I don't know, think about maybe I would focus on ... maybe for this month, all of the posts and social media things that I'm putting out would be focused on content marketing where in January, maybe I might flip to email marketing and newsletter production or something like that. It just helps you concentrate on a specific topic and then you put that on a calendar, and because you have different vehicles, your calendar would say your blog post goes out on Monday, your newsletter goes on Tuesday. You've got specific social media posts on Thursdays, those tips. They feel like really to a granular level. You're trying to show what you're going to deliver and when and that really helps you map that out. It's not just about writing the content; it's about the operations of delivering that content as well.

Susan Friedmann: So is there an optimum number of times that you should post during the week?

Bonnie Chomica: I think it depends on your audience. If you have a huge audience, if you've got thousands and thousands of people, then you are likely going to be posting like a blog post almost on a daily basis, and you probably have a team of people behind you that help you with that. If you're just starting out or you've got some traction, a blog post once a week would be great. If you're just starting out, I would suggest trying once a month to start with, and then increase the frequency. It just helps you get into how to do things. It gets a routine happening and then when you're comfortable, you can ramp it up.

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- Susan Friedmann: I know a question that I often get asked by authors is, which platform should I use?
- Bonnie Chomica: It depends on the type of content that you're putting out. If it's a blog post, any of the major website platforms are set up to have blogs. Certainly WordPress.org is one of the most popular. It was actually designed to be a blog platform. It's part of your website. It's not necessarily a specific website. It can be part, just another page on your website. With newsletters and e-zines, there's free versions and there's paid versions depending on how many subscribers that you have on your list. So things like MailChimp or Constant Contact, AWeber, ConvertKit. There's quite a few.
- The thing I would look for because they have similar features with the platform like that, I would look for someone with really good customer service, that they're easy to get to by phone or chat or email if they're responsive, because all of them, if you have a paid version, I think for the most part they have a free trial and they all have videos of tutorials and things like that, so it's really just mastering one because you wouldn't use more than one, I don't think.
- Social media, that depends on your audience. If you're going to be on Facebook or Instagram or LinkedIn, it really just depends on your audience. Those are the main platforms. The downloads, those are things that you turn into a PDF, so that you can start just with Word, or there's infographics, too. I don't have a tool specifically for infographics, although you could even create something in PowerPoint for an infographic, but there are specific tools. You just Google them and play with one and fine one that you're comfortable with.
- Susan Friedmann: Canva do them and that's a very inexpensive resource for listeners as well. Let's focus on the mistakes people make with regard to content marketing. What can you share with us about mistakes?
- Bonnie Chomica: A couple of things. The first one is really about being too sales-y. It's an 80/20 rule and we use that on social media as well. 80% of the time you want to be providing value. You want to be sharing your knowledge and showcasing what you know. The other 20% of the time, it's okay to promote what you have to sell. People know that's why you're there. If you remember those numbers, that will help you keep on track because if you just promote all the time, people will just stop following you. They'll leave your social sites. They'll unsubscribe from your emails, things like that.

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The other thing is to just do it haphazardly. It takes a commitment. As I mentioned, it's a long-term strategy so it doesn't do you any good if you just start and then stop. Sometimes you get stuck and you don't know what to post. I mean that's the big challenge often is people just don't know that to post, but it just takes some planning to do that. You need to be consistent so that your brand is top of mind as much as possible. So that requires putting more content out. So a lot of people start and then they just dribble off and they don't make that commitment.

The last mistake I'll give you is a big one, because lots of people think that they don't need to provide quality content. Because they're providing the content for free, it doesn't mean it has to be inferior. You need to provide good quality content to build that trust. There's no value in your content, you won't attract anybody.

Susan Friedmann: It's interesting that you say that people start and then peter out doing a different content marketing. I think much of it may have to do with the fact that they don't see a return on their investment. What are your thoughts on that?

Bonnie Chomica: It's very similar to social media. I hear the same things about social media marketing. Unless you're doing Facebook ads and you can be very specific with targets and seeing your results, it's again that long-term strategy. It's feeding the funnel. It's building trust. It's building your notoriety. It's building your authority. So it's just stirring the pot all the time. You can lead people to your sales funnel or to buy your book, but they're going to want to trust you first. Just an example might be like webinars. If you host a webinar that is typically educational content, here's how to do something, which is very valuable content, and people will sign up for webinars, at the end of that webinar is a perfect place to position an offer and people do it all the time. That's where you can either sell your book as a product or offer the services of whatever your expertise is in. The content just, again, builds that awareness, creates that trust, shows you're the authority.

Susan Friedmann: I don't want to put our listeners off, but I know that I've given presentations and sometimes it's taken a couple of years before somebody gets back to me and says, "You know, I heard you a couple of years ago and I'm just now ready to hire you." So you're absolutely right. You are in there for the long-term and just not to have unrealistic expectations. Wouldn't you agree?

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- Bonnie Chomica: Exactly. Content marketing is just one type of marketing strategy. Certainly, you should be promoting your book elsewhere as actual promotion, whether it's Amazon or in a bookstore. But to build your authority and your brand, content marketing is really a key factor.
- Susan Friedmann: I know that you do a lot of these for your clients, so if our listeners wanted to find out more about your services, Bonnie, how could they do that?
- Bonnie Chomica: Thank you for asking. My website is MarketingDoneWrite.ca, and Write is spelled W-R-I-T-E, so MarketingDoneWrite.ca. The CA is because I'm in Canada, or can email me at info@marketingdonewrite.ca.
- Susan Friedmann: Excellent. If you were to leave out listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be?
- Bonnie Chomica: I'm not sure who said this, but it's always really stuck with me and really defined content marketing for myself, you need to make your audience think, "Wow, if she provided this for free, imagine what I'd get if I paid for her content or services or her book."
- Susan Friedmann: I love that. You're right. I have no idea who said that, but I've heard it before and it is, it's so important. That's how people think. It's like, "Wow, if she's going to give this away for free, what am I going to get if I pay for it?" So, yeah.
- Bonnie Chomica: Exactly.
- Susan Friedmann: Excellent. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom, and thank you all for taking time out of your precious day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it sparked some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.