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BOOK MARKETING: How to Use FaceBook Ads for the Best Marketing Results Interview with Alexa Bigwarfe

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 book publishing expert. Alexa Bigwarfe is the owner and operator of Kat Biggie Press a small hybrid publisher with a niche in women's non-fiction, self help, spiritual and business books. She also runs Write, Publish, Sell an author coaching and support services business to help authors through the process of writing, publishing and selling their books. She uses Facebook ads to grow and strengthen the author platform in addition to selling books. Alexa is the author of Just Write It, Simple Strategies to Defeat Your Writing Fears and Hurdles. She's co-authored numerous other books. In her capacity as an Independent Book Publisher Association's advocacy committee member, Alexa advocates for hybrid presses and independent writers in the publishing industry. Alexa, what a pleasure it is to welcome you to the show and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Alexa: Thank you so much for having me, and I would say that one of our marketing tips right there should be make sure that your bio is short and easy to read.

Susan: Exactly. Exactly. No big words.

Alexa: Right. No tongue twisters there.

Susan: So, Alexa, I haven't spent much time talking about Facebook ads on these podcasts, so I thought that that would be a fun subject for you and I to discuss because you use it to help your authors grow their author platform. So talk to us about how you use them and what authors can and realistically can't do with Facebook ads.

Alexa: I'm going to try and keep this as low level as possible, so I don't lose anybody who's never been on here but there are some great ways that you can use Facebook and Facebook's Pay To Play, a method basically to get yourself in front of a wider audience and bigger people, and I mean, there are entire courses devoted to this so I don't intend to teach you everything you need to know but I'll give you a couple of tips. The first and the most important thing is what's

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called, a little thing called a Pixel. This is tremendously important for you, even if you don't plan on using big time Facebook ads or anything. If you go into the Facebook ads manager and you set up your account, you will see what they call the Pixel. You can add this to your website and the reason why it's important to add it to your website is because if you ever intend to do any type of marketing where you're sending people to sign up for your email list for example or something along those lines, you want to make sure that that Pixel has been added to your website, and you know what, Susan?

I think when we're done here, I'll create a little tutorial and put it on my website so that people can figure out how to find the Pixel and how to put it up there if that would be okay with you.

Susan: That would be fantastic. Yes, thank you.

Alexa: And so they could put it at writepublishsell.co/pixel and that will just make it super simple to find. What the Pixel does is it tracks people's actions and movements, okay? So, I'm sure you've noticed as you've been on Facebook if you go to Macy's for example and look for something, all of a sudden in your ads feed, you have Macy's ads showing up, and that's because of that little handy dandy Pixel that's tracking where you're going and what your actions are, and Facebook is trying to make sure that the most appropriate things are put in front of you based on your activities online. That Pixel is really one of the first things that you want to do to add to your website and get set up properly so that Facebook can start directing your ads to the right people and also so that you can do this fun thing called retargeting which is a pretty advanced skill but it allows you to direct your ads to people who have visited your website even if you don't have them in your email list or any of those things. So it's kind of a complicated thing, but it can be broken down fairly easily.

So, in a nutshell, if you want to do Facebook ads, find out about that Pixel and add it to your website. Let's back up to something even more simple and that is simply starting with a boosted post. If you don't have a Facebook business page, author page, book page, whatever you're trying to do, that's really the first place you have to start. So I'm assuming that you're already starting to grow your platform through a Facebook page. Now, what you can do is after you've created a fantastic post and you're just like I want all these people to see this post, you can click on the boost post thing. Now you have to have set up your account, again, so we'll make sure you know how to set up your account and it'll be connected to your credit card or your PayPal or whatever, but you can choose who to boost the post to. You can boost it to people that have already liked your page. You can boost it to friends of people who like your page or a

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whole variety of other things you can really get into, creating audiences that are very specific like say you've written a guide book for New York city.

Then you might want to target people not in New York city or people that like pages about visiting New York city, et cetera, et cetera. So the targeting function is really pretty cool, or you can just let Facebook decide where to go which really isn't the best funding of your money, so you want to think about your audience and who you want to get it to as a first thing. I hope that's not getting to down in the weeds or too ...

Susan: I think it's pretty good. It's pretty understandable. I'm following you and I know nothing about Facebook ads, so ...

Alexa: That's good. So, basically when you go to boost the page, assuming that you've already set up your account, it'll just give you some different options and you choose those things and it'll give you things and this is great because what boosting a post does particularly if you've set it up to reach the right people, is it puts that post on their newsfeed and then it brings people to your page into your post. I'm sure you've scrolled through Facebook before where you saw a sponsored post and you were like huh, that's interesting and you clicked like the page, so it can really grow your audience that way especially if it's a great post. Things to consider before you boost a post is to have some type of action call in your copy. You want really strong copy that makes it very clear from the first sentence on what you're trying to tell them, teach them, give them or whatnot. Avoid promises to people, like if you're in the health industry or niche, you don't want to promise people how you can lose weight in five weeks.

If there's anything that guarantees a promise like that, Facebook will reject it, so you want to make sure that you keep it generic, you don't use the word you, you don't use words like free or things like that that'll cause them to flag the post, and Facebook has pretty extensive guidelines listed out on that. You want a great picture. You want something that's going to stop people in their scroll if you will. I'm sure you've seen also people who have a post of like a picture of like beautiful waterfalls but the content has absolutely nothing to do with the waterfall. Sometimes that's a ploy to get people to just stop and look at that picture, and if your audience is right and your copy is good, they may still click on that post or engage with that post. Asking a question or giving them something to do so that they actually comment or like or share, all those types of things are great at building the engagement which then allows Facebook to say this is a good audience, people are engaging in it and show it to more people.

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Those are some of the easy tips that you can do just on a boosted post, and I'll tell you from working with a client who was trying to sell a book that she wrote for brides, using just a boosted post actually really grew her email list, so if done skillfully it can work really well and it also helped us grow her page because people were liking her page as they were engaging with that particular post.

Susan: From what I understand, Alexa, Facebook doesn't like you to actually sell something. They want sort of an intermediary stop, maybe to get a special report or something that will then lead them to a sale eventually, but not a direct sale. Am I correct in that thinking?

Alexa: That is very true. Facebook wants to make money themselves but they don't necessarily want the people that are giving them money to make money or at least not a lot of it, so things that are most effective for authors and when I help people design their ad campaigns and their boosted posts, what we like to do, we like their action to be to get to your web page for two reasons. One, if they never do anything on your web page but you've installed that Pixel, bam, you have somebody that you can now retarget and further boosted post or ads in the future because they visited your website and the Pixel tracked them, but secondly, it's a lot, lot easier to get people to sign up for something great and valuable as a free download for example, as a video, a quiz, something like that than it ever is for cold sales and anybody who's done marketing knows that it's obviously way harder to get a cold sale than it is to give away something for free, so usually when we set up our strategies it is to get people onto the email list and then to properly utilize that email list to build the trust factor and then sell your book or your product further down the line.

But with them on your email list obviously you'll have the opportunity to sell them again. Generally speaking what does not work well at all is to boost a post with your link to Amazon or even to create an ad set with your link to Amazon. You may see some increase in sales, but it's really difficult to get people that way for a lot of reasons, and also if you just direct them to your Amazon page, even if they buy the book, you have no idea of knowing who that person was because you're not going to get any information back from Amazon, so you miss the opportunity to get them on your list. You miss the opportunity if they go check out your book and decide they don't want it and then forget about it. You just miss so many opportunities, so I never, ever, ever recommend spending money to send cold traffic to an Amazon page. We'll just put it that way right off the bat. But get them some place where you can get their information and that's a great way to use it.

Susan: Let's talk about costs that are involved here. What kind of an investment would I have to have to make it meaningful to use Facebook ads?

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Alexa: So we've seen growth on, let's say your opportunity right now is to try and grow your Facebook page. We've seen growth by the hundreds with only about 25 dollars a week in expenditure. Now, people can spend thousands and thousands of dollars on Facebook ads and when you're running a high level offer, you do want to put more money in for larger things if you're launching a course or something like that, but you always want to scale your ads appropriately, and even, I've been training with a woman who makes millions of dollars for people through their Facebook ads and sales funnels, and even Julie always says start at the five dollar point, and there's a lot of reasons for this. One, there's no reason to put down 200 dollars on an ad that may or may not work. Two, you need the time to test your audience, to test your market to see if your copy is good, to make sure that people are actually engaging in that post, and then you can slowly as you weed, as you finesse and get better at your skills, you can slowly start increasing the budget for that particular ad.

So always start at five dollars and then if it's doing really well, you can incrementally increase it after a day or two and then increase again after another day or two. I don't really understand the Facebook algorithm behind it but I know from other people who are much smarter at this than I am that it's never a good idea to do a jump from like five to 100 dollars, so if it's doing well and it's getting to a lot of people, just increase it very slowly, five to ten dollars, ten to 15, 15 to 20, and do it spread out over time.

Susan: Interesting. So how do you feel that this actually grows and strengthens and author's platform?

Alexa: Well, by a couple of reasons. First of all, if you can get people to start liking your page, obviously that's a good thing, but when you have something that people are engaging with and commenting on, interacting with, liking, sharing, all of those things, every time somebody does something like this, it sends a little message to Facebook that what you're putting out is good content. So, people often get scared of posting too much on their Facebook page, but the reality is Facebook only shows your post to about four percent of your people, so say you only have 125 people that have liked your author page. Only about four percent of those people are ever seeing anything that you post, unless they've chosen to follow you or see you first or those types of things which are options they can choose. So you want to post frequently and you want to post content that people are actually engaging with because then Facebook says aha, this is good.

If the people that like this page love whatever's happening, we're going to show it to more people, and as more people come then other people get notified of their activities as well and it's a natural kind of snowball effect if you're doing really well which is why I mentioned, even when you're not boosting posts, a

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great image, something that's really gained a lot of traction right now that people are just eating up and really seeing high numbers on their pages is this whole thing with the gif. The gif, if you post a page with like okay, I'm a writer. I've had a long week. I'm feeling really tired. Show me how you're feeling today using a gif and plop that in there and people are really responding super well to those and their getting lots and lots of engagement and feedback, and it's bringing in people that don't already like the page as well, and you don't even have to pay to boost that. It's naturally boosting itself because it's super popular and people are having fun and doing those types of things.

So, the short answer to your question is that the more people that you can find or the better content that you can put out there that people are really enjoying and sharing and interacting with, the more people that are going to find you because Facebook is going to show it to them and to bring them to you and then you want to, obviously, get them to like your page and stick around, so that you can then do ads and show off your product in other posts or your book.

Susan: How about other strategies that you find work well for your authors? What would you recommend?

Alexa: So we are all about doing sneaky marketing and outside of the box marketing because there are millions of people writing books. There are millions of books being launched and promoted all over the place, so we try to get a little bit creative. One of my authors who is publishing a book, it's a humor book for parents basically, and the gif strategy that I just talked about with her is doing really well, really, really well, like we're seeing thousands of people engaging and interacting with these posts, and people are having a blast with it. So that's a good way to do it. Another strategy is to post frequently which people get a little bit scared about posting too much but again, just know that Facebook is only showing it to the certain percentage so you do want to post frequently but you do not want to post buy my book, buy my book, my book's available, hey, look, I have a book, all those types of things.

You want to be creating content that is relevant to you and your target audience but is not constantly in your face about buying the book, and then you want to do some content strategy using your blog and creating information that drives them, that they want to see anyway and that you're posting and sharing from other authors in your genre or your niche, posting interesting articles that have to do with what's happening, so in particular using Facebook, those are our strategies. Then doing interesting and outside of the box thinking when it comes to what your email opt-in should be, and I'm sure you've had plenty of people talk about email opt-ins, but you want those people on your list, but you want to stay away from doing things like just join my email list because nobody wants

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to just join an email list anymore. They've got to be getting something of value and interest out of it, so as much as you can think of something that you would put your name in for, that's what you want to try and create for them.

Something that we've been doing with our authors recently is having them record an excerpt from their book, and then now, their opt-in is download a sample or two of me reading some of my favorite excerpts from the book, and that one is working well.

Susan: I like that. That's a really good, what do they call them? Lead magnets to really engage people and as you say, get them on your list because if they're just on Facebook, when I have authors say to me, oh, I've got hundreds of people who like me on Facebook, I'm like well, if Facebook goes away tomorrow you don't know who all these people are and you can't market to them.

Alexa: That's so true. Another fun thing is quizzes. People love quizzes, and there are some easy plug-ins and tools that you can use to set up a quiz and they go through the quiz and they select certain things and then they opt into your email list to either get, download that describes what they are or you enter in your email to find out what type of wedding you want to plan back to the first example or what type of exerciser you are or whatever your quiz is based around. People love quizzes.

Susan: Do you have some recommendations for some plug-ins for quizzes?

Alexa: I don't recall the names of them off the top of my head. I'm sorry, but I can get that information to you.

Susan: Excellent. Yeah, we could post that on the show page as well along with that lovely video that you were going to put together, so that's great, and also that idea of making a little video for people on a particular subject, I can imagine that, too, is one of your little sneaky marketing ideas.

Alexa: Absolutely. Anything that's not just sign up for my list or download another 300 page pdf. Anything, obviously free books if you have other books to give away are great. One page checklists. Often people think that they know what people want, but then they put together something that they're like wait a minute, would I give someone my email list, my email address for this? And if you say yes, then it's probably a good opt in. If you say hm, not sure, then maybe you're on the wrong track.

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- Susan: Yeah, I've seen that many times is that I might put something out there and I think oh, wow, this is a great giveaway, but nobody signs up for it, so it wasn't such a great giveaway.
- Alexa: Right.
- Susan: How about mistakes you find that authors make with regard to their marketing?
- Alexa: Oh, the biggest mistake and I know that you and I agree on this because we talked about it in an interview we did together for a summit, but that is not starting early enough with the marketing. You can honestly never start early enough, and growing a platform is a long and arduous process, except for the overnight wonders who just hit it right on the head. Most people it takes quite a bit of time. So you want to start early and you want to start getting people on your email list. If there's one thing I could go back five years ago and do, that would be to start growing my email list sooner because it's a gold mine really. And then finding ways to engage with your community and show them who you are as the author. A lot of times people just post things about their book or post content from other people or post, some of the things that I just listed off, but what I didn't mention was have them get to know you as a person, and with a lot of writers that are introverts it scares the pants off of them to post a picture of themselves or to go live or something like that, but the reality is, people love to know who you are and they love to know behind the scenes.

So if you're scared of going live, one of the most interacted with types of posts on Facebook is a picture of a person posted live by you, yourself, the owner of the page. So if you can, if you're scared to put your face in it, you can even do something like snap a picture of yourself as you're writing. Snap a picture of your working area or something and post it up there and say hey, guys, I'm hard at work today. This is what I'm working on. What are you doing? Or something like that. Those types of things really are great.

Not really knowing who your target audience is. Spend some time figuring out who it is that's actually going to want and benefit from your book, and really make sure that you're producing content and things that are going to attract and draw those people because many people make the mistake of trying to get their book in front of everybody but the reality is everybody doesn't need your book. I am not going to buy a book about weight training. It's just not going to happen. You could target me with every kind of ad in the entire world and I am not going to buy a book about weight training. So make sure that you're looking to the right people and engaging with those people.

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Not understanding what people want. Writing a book that's based on what you think people want and not what people actually do want, and one of the things I suggest is to go look on Amazon and see some books in your genre that are very similar to what you're doing and see what people put in the comments, in the reviews because they are more than likely going to say what they didn't like about the book or what they felt was missing and make sure that you're not making those same mistakes when you write your book.

Susan: If our listeners wanted to find out more about your services, Alexa, how could they do that?

Alexa: The easiest way to find me is either on Facebook or through my website and on Facebook, we have a group called Write, Publish, Sell and that's a very engaged group where we hang out and talk about stuff like this actually and provide tips and resources. I also have a page, Write, Publish, Sell with Alexa Bigwarfe and then my website is writepublishsell.co.

Susan: If you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget what might that be, Alexa?

Alexa: This is hard because I feel like there's so many things that I could share, but I think the golden nugget really lies in trying to stand out and do things just a little bit differently from what other people in your niche or market competitors are doing actually, and if you're writing a book on dieting, there are thousands of books on dieting, so how is it that yours is going to be different? How are you going to stand out and make it so that people want to buy your book as opposed to the 5,000 other choices that they have, and that takes a little bit of time and research and it takes engaging with people that are following you and asking what they need and want, but definitely make sure that whatever book you're trying to sell stands out from the herd, and don't be afraid to put some marketing budget behind it. I think a lot of people just assume their book should sell just because it's a good book, but the reality is it's a product. You need to consider yourself a sales person or an entrepreneur and you need to put some money behind the marketing of it.

Susan: Yes. So many times that as you rightly say, people don't think about putting money aside for marketing. They put all their money into actually getting the book out there and then nothing. So, that marketing tip very valuable. So thank you so much for sharing, 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.