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BOOK MARKETING: How to Best Leverage a Niche Market With Your Book Interview with Dr. Rhoberta Shaler

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 relationship expert. As a relationship consultant, mediator, speaker and author, Dr. Rhoberta Shaler, The Relationship Help Doctor, provides urgent and ongoing care for relationships in crisis at home and at work. Her mission is to help people stop tolerating abuse. Even the United States Marines have sought her help. She focuses on helping the partners, exes, and adult children of the relentless difficult people she calls "hijackals". She offers strategies for dealing the constant uncertainty and jaw-dropping behaviors of toxic people. Author of 16 books, including *Escaping the Hijackal Trap* and *Stop! That's Crazy-Making! How to Stop Playing the Passive-Aggressive Game*. She's the host of the weekly Relationship Help Show on BBS Radio. Rhoberta, welcome to the show and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

Rhoberta Shaler: No, thank you, Susan. It's a delight to be with you.

Susan Friedmann: Rhoberta, many of our listeners might be wondering what your relationship expertise has to do with book marketing. I know that you have focused on a particular niche market to the point that it's almost like a micro-niche. You've become a recognized expert in that area. Can you talk to our listeners about the importance of niche marketing and how it serves you as an author?

Rhoberta Shaler: Oh, certainly. Let me just say, Susan, that I was like most people that I've met or that I speak to about this topic. People like to think that they're going to lose market share if they create a narrow, deep, niche or a niche. I'm from Canada, so I say it both ways. I had to learn the hard way to reduce and reduce and reduce the size of my target audience. I did so, first of all by going to write about passive aggressive people,

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because as a relationship consultant, obviously, I could go in any direction I wanted at the beginning. But, over time, I finally saw the wisdom that people were trying to teach me about having a very narrow, deep niche. As I moved into it, then my writing moved into it, my focus, my radio show, all the pieces that then came from knowing exactly who my audience is.

Susan Friedmann: I love that you say that because I believe, like you, the more narrow the niche, the more focused your marketing can be. It can be more efficient, more effective. As you said, you can design everything around this: all these different products, all these shows, the articles. Everything that you do is so narrowly targeted. How do you find that your books fit into your overall business and marketing strategy?

Rhoberta Shaler: Well, all of my books deal with helping people manage their lives and deal with conflict within and without, so they're all part of what I talk about. The more that I narrowed the niche, the more books I wrote about the narrow niche. I publish things in print and often I try them out first as eBooks so that I know whether or not somebody needs a hard copy. As I talk about books or as I do radio interviews or as I appear on television or whatever I'm doing, I can always have in my back pocket a book title that I've written that is useful to somebody in a specific need that they have. A book can be seen as a very expensive business card or it can be that follow-up piece that you leave behind that says, "Here. I can't walk through life with you every moment, but here's a book that you can have in your back pocket." Very important part of the process.

Susan Friedmann: Did you find that your credibility in the marketplace excelled once you had your book?

Rhoberta Shaler: Oh, sure. Everybody wants to know you've written a book. I think it's important to, as I say, put your fanny on the fabric and write a book if you're an expert at something. It demonstrates your expertise. It demonstrates your stick-to-it-iveness. It demonstrates that you really care about your marketplace. Many people will write a book because they've always had a book in them, of course, but they'll write a book because it's the next right thing to do. I don't know that that's great motivation just because it's good marketing, but if you have something to say, your people want to be able to have you in their back pocket and book is a great way.

Susan Friedmann: So, if an author was starting out in a new niche, what is the simplest action you would recommend they take?

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- Rhoberta Shaler: Be very, very careful that you're going to be happy in that niche for a long time because it takes time to develop it, it takes time to be known. Then, start out with a strategy. The first thing that happened for me that led me down this path was I became The Relationship Help Doctor, so my brand was very, very clear. Then, when I stepped into the niche of passive-aggressives, which finally led me to creating the term "hijackals" and working with the partners, the exes, the adult children, the coworkers of the relentlessly difficult people I call "hijackals", then I could write more about them because people wanted to know. So the very first thing is to be absolutely clear, and then focus on it every single day. Ask yourself: what are the three high value, high return activities I can do first every day?
- Susan Friedmann: It really takes some effort to find that niche, calling yourself The Relationship Help Doctor. How long did that take for you to really come up with that term and feel comfortable with it?
- Rhoberta Shaler: I started using it about six years ago. Of course, I have a doctorate in psychology so it wasn't too much of a stretch. My website is forrelationshiphelp.com, so Relationship Help Doctor popped out quite easily from that. It was exactly what I do every day and it absolutely gave credibility because I do have a doctorate. So it wasn't too difficult, and it's not cute. It is exactly what I do.
- Susan Friedmann: I think that's really important, that your business says what you do, the name of your business. In fact, one of the strategies that I outline in my Riches in Niches book, How to Make it BIG in a Small Market, is to have a name that says what you do. You do exactly that, so I'm going to use that as an example, so thank you.
- Rhoberta Shaler: You're welcome. I think it's so important, exactly what you're saying, Susan. I think that's very good advice. I, like many people, like to play with things and play with words. I could be terribly clever, but if nobody is looking for the clever, I will never be found. They're looking for what they're looking for, not what I want to put out there, so we all need to know that. That's how it's going to happen.
- Susan Friedmann: It's interesting that you say that because the very first business I started, I went the cutesy route and the clever route and I called my company "Diet and Communications" and nobody knew what on earth I did. It took me several years before I realized that and went to go to a name that said more what I did. I like the fact that you highlight that because that really is a very important piece. As an author builds their business,

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obviously their personal life can come under some strenuous situations, and especially when you write a book. What are some of the recommendations you can offer for an author, for a business owner, to keep a healthy work/life balance.

Rhoberta Shaler:

Oh, let me put a plug in here for a book I wrote with my partner. The book is called *Soul Solitude: Taking Time for Our Souls to Catch Up*. What I would say to you is, everybody needs to give themselves time to be still every day, to catch up with yourself, to sit down and just say, "What am I thinking? What am I feeling? What do I need? What do I want?" When I wrote the book *Kaizen for Couples*, that book is all about: who are you in the relationship and how to give your best to the relationship so that you know you've done your part, and then how to do that as a couple.

To be able to say, Susan, at any moment ... To know yourself well enough and to have stopped and been quiet and get to know yourself and just listen for a bit every day, or even once or twice a day, it allows you to be able to say to somebody, "I feel this way. I think this way. I need this. I want this," because you have become used to identifying that for yourself and you're clear. If you don't know what you think, feel, need, and want, you can't communicate that. If you can't communicate it, you're likely not going to get because none of us are in a relationship, whether work or home, with mind readers.

Susan Friedmann:

Very much so. I know that I have to remember that because sometimes I expect my husband to mind read what's going on. Then when I sort of flare up about something he's like, "Well, what's going on? Tell me about it." It's like, "Well, you're meant to know."

"No, I'm not telepathic."

Rhoberta Shaler:

That's right. When I'm working with couples, which I do all over the world because I work by video conferencing, this comes up all the time. "If you loved me, you'd know what I want." Oh, no. That has nothing to do with it. Just because I love you doesn't mean I can read your mind, and I don't want to put you in a box, to suggest that because you wanted that last year that you still want it, or you thought that or you felt that last week. Maybe you still don't want it. We have to stay current and present, up to date with our partners, and allow each other to grow and change and transform.

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Susan Friedmann: As you move through your business, I'm sure that you've made mistakes along the way. Can you share any of those with us?

Rhoberta Shaler: Sure.

Susan Friedmann: Ones that you'd be willing to share.

Rhoberta Shaler: Sure. The first one I mentioned already. I was going to be all things to all people because I could. I think back 30 years ago, well of course, I have a doctorate in psychology, bring me any problem at all. Then it became all about relationships, then it became about passive-aggressive people, and eventually ... And I was given that information 30 years ago: have a narrow, deep niche. Oh, no, no, no. I'm leaving money on the table. I'm leaving money on the table. No. If you happen to be 25 or 30 years old right now and you're listening to this program, shortcut your journey. Get a very narrow, deep niche, and become an expert because that was one mistake I made.

Another mistake was believing that because I had a book, people would want it and I wouldn't have to do so much marketing. If you write a book, it looks great in your signature file on your email, it looks great on your website. But if you don't go into social media, if you don't do what you need to do to let people know the book exists, the book will sit on the shelf, even if it's on Amazon's shelf. Many of my books are on Amazon, but I have to sell them. Amazon won't sell them for me. They're just sitting on a shelf. A mistake that I made was to think, "All right, I got it out there," but not have a plan to let people know it was available.

Susan Friedmann: That's so true. So many times, and I'm sure my listeners are almost sick of hearing me say this, but Amazon is just a shop window and you've got to bring people to that shop window. If you don't, as you say, it just sits there on the shelf and nobody knows about it because there are hundreds of books, I bet, on relationships out there. Why should they pick yours if they don't even know about it?

Rhoberta Shaler: That's right, and that brings us to the topic, Susan, of titles. When you go on Amazon, your title has to say what it's about. It has to be immediately attractive. The subtitle has to explain what they're going to get from it. Then you have to know how to describe your book on Amazon. All of these things take work. Where the work comes in is in knowing yourself. So to go back to your mistake question, Susan, I think it's a big mistake ... I, fortunately, didn't get too trapped in this mistake,

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but I think it's a mistake to think that you will be able to just put something out there, as I said, and people will come, but that you can talk about your book and then you have to be able to sell that book in a way that is non-obtrusive. That's where we make a mistake.

I was in Facebook group watching posts yesterday, and this woman asked a question as her post to stimulate some conversation. Every single time someone answered the question, or almost every time, she put as her reply a link to her book. It was so obvious that she wasn't in the business of helping people. She was in the business of selling, and that has to be secondary, in my opinion, to knowing what your mission is. As you said in the introduction, my mission is to help people stop tolerating abuse. If that's my mission, then quite a ways below that is selling a book. I have to have that system in place, but I get up in the morning thinking about: how can I help people stop tolerating abuse today, and then let the systems work for themselves. That's very, very important, and fundamental to being successful.

Susan Friedmann: I like that because we're really not selling books. We're selling how we can serve and help other people, and the book just happens to be part of that package. It isn't the package.

Rhoberta Shaler: Right, and if we think it is, if we think it's the whole package ... Let's just talk about this for a minute. I think it was 1980 I read a book that just knocked my socks off, and so I went to find where this person was speaking and I traveled from Canada to California. I was so excited. Then she spoke, and she was a terrible speaker. It was just so disappointing. So if you don't know yourself well enough to know whether your platform should be one-on-one, you should be a speaker because you're great at it and you can get your message out and your book, then, will be promoted from your speaking ... Don't get into the muddle that this person did, to my perception was, she's a great writer, a terrible speaker, and she absolutely turned me off. I had spent thousands of dollars to come and hear her speak. She shouldn't have been speaking. She should have used that time to write another book, because that's what she was good at. Stay in your lane, that's what I'm saying.

Susan Friedmann: That brings up a memory for me. Something similar happened, and actually it was a TV anchor who I really admired. He was invited to be a panelist and his speech was awful. He was absolutely awful and I was like, "Oh, my goodness. You're such an incredible interviewer of other people. Why isn't it that you can speak?" If you're going out there to the speaking circuit, you definitely have to be a good speaker and he was

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just relying on his credibility as an incredible interviewer on the regular show that he was on.

Rhoberta Shaler: And he had a teleprompter.

Susan Friedmann: Probably. Guaranteed.

Rhoberta Shaler: That helps a lot.

Susan Friedmann: It does.

Rhoberta Shaler: I'm not saying that everybody has to be a great speaker. Just know yourself really well. What is your lane? How do you get this out? I'm at the point in my career, Susan, where I'm all about legacy. Let me get out everything I have to say to as many people as possible so they have the information and they can have a better life. Know where you're at in life. It's very important, because then you know what to do as those three high value, high return activities every day. It's not a high value activity for some people to get up in the morning and run to Facebook, but for me it's a high value activity because I belong to a lot of groups that deal with people who are in situations with toxic, difficult people, or they're being abused.

All I do is go into these groups that I belong to, as well as the ones that I run, and I help people and that's the contribution. Magically, many of those people click on my name and end up subscribing to my newsletter and stay in contact with me or send me a private message and say, "How can I work with you?" But it comes from making the contribution and then having something on your website, like a book, that when they get there, there is something immediate they can do. They can get more of you.

Susan Friedmann: In fact, that ties in really nicely with the fact that ... Outlining, maybe, some of your best marketing strategies, would you say that being on Facebook is one of them? What do you like as a marketing strategy?

Rhoberta Shaler: Everything that I do is about relationships, so social media works really well for me. It may not work for everybody because it's very time consuming, but I'm about solving problems for individual people so it really helps. My Facebook pages, I have several of them. I have a Hijackals page, I have a For Relationship Help group, I have a group for people who are in relationship with hijackals, it's called Optimize Life. From there, you can send me a private message and get into my secret

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group. Those things are key because I have created safe places where people can talk. Other than that, I do a newsletter every two weeks. Big caveat there, Susan. If you're going to do a newsletter, do it consistently. Choose a schedule that you're happy with, your readers are not unsubscribing from because it's too frequent or too infrequent. Stick with it. Whatever you choose, choose carefully. Do it in a laser-focused way, not a buckshot approach.

This is what I do. It goes from my radio show, The Relationship Help Show on BBS Radio. That is done in audio but it's recorded, guest recordings are done in video. Everything has to be leveraged, so I do that show, three segments are mine, two are a guest. I have it is a video, I have it as audio. I have it transcribed. When it goes on YouTube, the transcription goes to get more SEO. When it goes as audio, I have beautiful graphics for each of my guests. I give the graphic to the guest with the archive link. They do their social media and their newsletters. Everything flows outward from my audio/visual stuff.

Right now, I'm writing my 17th book. We haven't really talked about the writing process, but some people are painstaking writers. Some people write easily, as you so well know. For me, I can write at the drop of a hat, 1,500 words in an hour, no problem. I don't have to edit it, I proofread it. Other people can't do that. So when I decide, "Okay, the book is ready to be written," it's totally intuitive what the next book is and when it is going to come forth. When I get that "go" sign, I sit down from 6:00 until 11:00 each morning until it's done, which is usually three and a half to four weeks.

Susan Friedmann: That's pretty amazing.

Rhoberta Shaler: Let's be fair. I have been doing this for 35 years. I have a huge amount of experience and expertise and information, so if I can pull it together, all I have to do is sit there and it'll come out my fingertips. Not everybody is like that. Some people don't organize that way. If you're about to write your first book, I advise you to do what I did. I wrote a little newsletter every day for a year, then I collected up the best tips that I gave in that whole time and that was my first book. But it was all mine.

I have a bias. I received a book in the mail the other day from a would-be guest. She had her name on the front. This was her book. Susan, it was unbelievable. She didn't even write the forward or the first chapter or anything. It is simply a collection of stories written by other people

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for her. That, to me, was very disappointing. I wouldn't recommend doing that. If you want to chunk it down to write a book, write 500 words a day in some kind of format as your first book, a tip a day or something, and then collect it up and have a book. Then you know what your focus is. You know what your target audience is. You can then bring forth whatever information you have every day and you can do something like that. Or, if you have a blog, decide on your book. Chunk it down into chapters, chunk it down into sections, and write a blog post on each section. Get that out there. At the end of the time, you have a book.

Susan Friedmann: Yes, and you can do in the reverse. If you reverse engineer it, you've got your book and you can turn those into hundreds of blog posts and articles and tips. You've got everything at your fingertips. You're absolutely correct with that. That's fabulous advice. How could our listeners contact you, Rhoberta, if they wanted more information about your services?

Rhoberta Shaler: Sure, just go to my website, forrelationshiphelp.com. You'll see everything there. You'll see the radio show, the download of the free ebook, How to Spot a Hijackal. Then there's a navigation tab on "Work with Dr. Shaler." There's things about my books, there's things about my upcoming programs, the retreat weekends that I do to help people recover. Everything is there, and you can also find me on Facebook with my name, Rhoberta Shaler. Remember ... How could you remember? We haven't told you. It's Rhoberta Shaler, so you can find me on Facebook or LinkedIn or Twitter. They're all the same. Then you can have a look and see what I do and how I do it, because I think it's quite transparent.

Susan Friedmann: I think just knowing all those different things, it's interesting for someone to go in and just mosey around a see what it is you're doing because those are different marketing strategies that I'm sure other people can adopt. That will be wonderful. If you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be, Rhoberta?

Rhoberta Shaler: Oh, it's simple, Susan: leverage, leverage, leverage. Never write anything you can't use at least three times. Never make a video you can't use in three ways. Never make an audio that you can't make an article from. Everything has to have at least three uses.

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Susan Friedmann:

I love that advice. I love to cut, dice, and slice and slice everything into as many different ways as possible, so thank you for that information. 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.