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BOOK MARKETING: How to Build the Right Personal Brand For Yourself Interview with Cyndy Porter

- 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 personal branding expert. Cyndy Porter is the founder and owner of Success thru Style. She coaches professional women in discovering their personal brand and living it inside and out.
- Susan Friedmann: She teaches her clients to create an intentional image, showing them how this is the easiest way to boost self-confidence. Cyndy spent 20 years in sales and marketing in Fortune 500 companies. She understands what it takes to succeed in business. Going from being a shy, sensitive and insecure girl, a target for bullies, she now impacts women around the world to show up with confidence and style. Cyndy and I have gotten to know each other through a yearlong business development program we're both enrolled in, so Cyndy, what a pleasure it is to have you as my guest on this show. Thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.
- Cynthia Porter: Thank you. I'm excited to be here. Susan.
- Susan Friedmann: Cyndy, personal branding, personal image. Why do you think it's so important for our authors to build a personal brand for themselves?
- Cynthia Porter: Well, of course, I think it's important for everybody, and I think it's especially important for subject matter experts. Your authors, of course, are subject matter experts. And they need to, in my opinion, think of their book as a product and actually think of themselves that way, too, so that when people are meeting them, when they're interacting with their book, when they're interacting with their business, whatever it is that they do, they see that who they are as a person and what they believe in is all one and the same.
- Susan Friedmann: And how would they go about building a personal brand for themselves?

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Cynthia Porter: It's very similar to having a business brand. I think a lot of people are familiar with the concept of Apple having a brand or Starbucks having a brand and what they go through and the process of having people understand what their brand stands for. And so a lot of times what companies do is they start with a mission statement and what they call a brand promise so that you know that when you go into a Starbucks, the experience that you expect is going to be consistent. You know that they're going to be friendly. You know that they're going to not have inexpensive coffees, right? A coffee at Starbucks is different than a coffee at Dunkin Donuts. You know what it's going to feel like to sit in their chairs and be in the environment, what the music's going to sound like. All of that is part of their brand and it's intentional. Again, it's designed to give you an experience.

Cynthia Porter: And the same thing goes for individuals who are subject matter experts or who have a book that when they interact with the person, whether they hear them talking about their book, whether they're reading the book, whether they're reading a blog about the book, that it's all one in the same, that it's consistent. What we know is that when we show up in a way that's not consistent, when we don't look in a way that's consistent with our words, when the experience that we provide in our book or when we speak is not consistent, it's actually psychologically jarring and it reduces our trustworthiness to our audience.

Susan Friedmann: You mentioned a brand promise. How would you even go about finding the right brand promise for yourself?

Cynthia Porter: When I work with my clients, we usually start with taking a list of all of the adjectives that are out there and seeing if they could come up with fewer than five that they would want to choose that, when they show up, whether it's in writing or whether it's in person, that they're communicating those adjectives. I then ask them to think about values, because sometimes values can be different than adjectives. A value might be something like, you know, you believe in spirituality. You believe in the love of learning. You believe in treating people with kindness and tolerance.

Cynthia Porter: It might be a little bit different than saying, "Well, I want people to see me as approachable and sophisticated and knowledgeable and smart," right? So those are kind of two different things that if you then look at that and you can maybe come up with just five words in total that represent who you are, you could take it a step further and actually write a mission statement the same way a business writes a mission

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statement. And so at the end of the day, you're basically doing some exercises to say, "Who am I and what do I believe in?" And then if you take it to your brand promise, it is who is your ideal client? What do you want to say to them? What do you represent? What do you want their experience with you to be? And if you can get that really crystallized and concise and have a message that you really want to communicate, I think that you're on your way for a brand promise.

Susan Friedmann: Talk to us a bit about color. I know that that often is something that comes up, and people ask about different colors, and what's the right color to use if you want to portray, let's say, power or softness or authenticity. Talk to us a little bit about color.

Cynthia Porter: There's a lot of psychology that we know about color. Exactly what you're saying, that different colors, kind of at an unconscious level, give us a feeling or an emotion. We know, for example, that red, as you said, is a high energy power color. Something interesting that we know is that when women wear red and they are interviewed by a man, that their chance of getting the job is statistically increased. But if they are interviewed by a woman, their chances of getting the job is statistically reduced.

Cynthia Porter: How a woman feels about another woman in red versus how a man feels about a woman in red are two totally different things. But typically, we see them in fast food restaurants, right? We see red painted walls, because they want you to eat faster and get out. Whereas in a child's nursery, the walls are typically painted blue, because we know that blue is a calming color. There are definitely connotations associated with color. And since I'm also an image consultant and I teach people how to dress to look their best, not just communicate their brand but look their personal best, there's something about knowing that the colors are physically attractive on you and bringing those colors into your business and your business brand.

Susan Friedmann: Would you recommend, for instance, that the look and feel of the book should in fact be something that is part of your brand of who you are? Or would you see that as something completely separate?

Cynthia Porter: No, no, no, no, absolutely. I think it's important that you pick your brand colors for your website and your logo and all of your marketing. That should translate depending, right? So if your book is an extension of your business, and you're talking about your expertise, then I would

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think you would want to brand your book that it fits with the branding of your overall business and your brand promise and everything goes along together so it looks like it's cohesive. If for some reason your book is a completely different entity to the rest of your business, then it can have its own look and feel and font and image and color scheme.

- Susan Friedmann: It is fascinating, because I think that whole idea of, as you say, fonts, even considering the font and how that might play into people's emotions about your book.
- Cynthia Porter: The studies show that we have fewer than seven seconds to make a first impression, and now we're learning that it's even faster than that. So that happens when we show up and make a first impression in person. But it also happens when people first look at your book cover, first go to your website, first look at your business card. And so, that first impression needs to use all of these kind of subconscious mechanisms in the font, in the color, in the messaging. Even on the back cover, where you have your headshot, making sure that the clothes that you're wearing, the expression on your face, all of those things are consistent as well.
- Susan Friedmann: Just even looking friendly on those headshots, I know is very important, as having a smile. I mean, so many people don't smile, and it's like very off putting.
- Cynthia Porter: I agree. And having eye contact and ... But of course, if your brand is to be mysterious or to be serious, tough love ... Like, there are some brands where maybe you want to have your arms crossed and look a little stern because you're communicating that you are that person that's, for whatever reason, in the business that you're in, is more stern. If that person were smiling and wearing light pastel colors, then that would be off brand the same way as if somebody who wants to be seen as approachable and nurturing, if they were wearing black and not smiling, that would be off brand.
- Susan Friedmann: How about mistakes that you find people make when it comes to their personal brand?
- Cynthia Porter: The biggest mistake that I think people make is to not take it seriously. I think that it's a relatively new concept that people are starting to think of themselves as a brand in that they're taking the time to really be intentional about what they want to communicate and knowing that the studies show that 85% of our first impression has to do in those first

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seven-ish seconds. And when we say, "Oh, it shouldn't matter. My content speaks for itself," I think, honestly, that is the biggest mistake that people make. And I think if you just walk around and see people in the world and how little attention that they put to first appearances, whether, again, it's in your book cover or whether it's in how you're showing up physically ... I wish it weren't that way. I wish we weren't in such a superficial, judgmental world, but we are just biologically hardwired to judge first.

Cynthia Porter: It comes from a place of safety, and it's been with us since the beginning of time. And I think some people feel like it's superficial. Like, "Oh, I don't have time. I'm not a fashionista. I don't want to worry about how I look." And the same thing with their printed materials. I mean, they put all this time and effort to having amazing content. They maybe want to save money by not having a designer to kind of design the cover. And I don't agree that ... What is the old adage? You can't judge a book by its cover? I actually think it's the opposite. We're often judging the book exactly by its cover.

Susan Friedmann: I absolutely have to agree with you with that. That really is important. And the fact that, you know, you said that people think that, "Oh, you know, the content's going to speak for itself," as if the content is jumping out at people and saying, "Hey, this is what you need. You don't need anything else," it's sort of very shortsighted. Yes. What other mistakes, Cyndy?

Cynthia Porter: I think being inconsistent. I know that, in my experience ... And it all goes back to this first impression thing. I know professional organizers that I've worked with, who just dress a little bit frumpy. I know artists ... I don't know if we've talked about this, but I'm also a professional photographer. And so I've been to a lot of conventions with photographers, and it's like the uniform of choices to wear black, right? I think the benefit of that is if we're at an event as a photographer, we want to disappear. We don't want to be seen because we're capturing somebody else's event.

Cynthia Porter: But when you're meeting somebody at the first time and you're just wearing all black, the automatic assumption is, "Well, you don't look creative." Like, they're hiring somebody to be creative, and the same goes with a graphic artist or an interior designer. And I see so many artists, out of the box thinkers, who dress kind of in ways that are maybe a little bit drab, that just kind of blend in. Making sure not only

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that you are having an image, but that that image communicates who you are.

Cynthia Porter: An accountant should dress differently than an artist. A therapist should dress different than an exercise physiologist. We really do need to communicate consistency with who we are. I might be repeating myself by going back and saying it's all about being intentional, but I really do think that that's the key, is to take the time to think about what you want to project in your writing, in your speaking, and in your physical appearance, and make sure that it is intentional and consistent.

Susan Friedmann: Couple of things came up for me when you said that. I recall, early on in my speaking career, being all in black for an all-day seminar. And in the evaluations, I got slammed for what I was wearing, and it upset me so much. But then when I spoke to a [colornista 00:14:31], if you can call them that, they said, "Yes, black is actually a draining color. When you have to look at somebody for a long period of time and they're all in black, it sort of has this effect of ... on you."

Cynthia Porter: It does. And it's a good point because when you're speaking, you're the one who's responsible for bringing the energy to the room. Wearing color that doesn't detract from your words ... So I wouldn't want people to take that. I mean, you know this more than anybody, that you can't have lots of mixed colors because that's kind of distracting from the words. But a bright, solid color that brings energy to the room is super important for a speaker.

Susan Friedmann: And as a speaker, I know, as you said, you don't want too many colors. You don't want people to be focused on you and what you're wearing rather than the message you're trying to convey.

Cynthia Porter: Exactly. But as you said, you also don't want to be in all black, which is kind of draining and it kind of reduces energy. Black's a good color to wear if you want to be invisible, if you want to kind of be in the woodwork. In a support role, black's maybe a good color. But you're definitely not going to stand out from a crowd and be memorable, so it's not typically a recommended color for somebody who wants to be seen as an expert or a thought leader or leave a memorable impression.

Susan Friedmann: Now, what are your thoughts about something that's unique to you? Let's say ... I know I used to always have a certain scarf that I always wore and it was almost like my trademark, wearing that scarf. I know other speakers have got some kind of flower in their hair, for instance,

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something that really sort of sets them apart and it's theirs. They do that. Another speaker only wears hats for her presentations. What are your thoughts on that?

Cynthia Porter: I think that's an okay thing to do. I don't do that for myself, and I haven't helped any of my clients do that. I think that it's more interesting to have variety. What I teach my clients first, we figure out the brand. Who are you and what are you communicating? Something that I haven't mentioned to you is I've created nine avatars. We go through and we say, "So who am I and how do I want to show up?" It can be hard to buy clothes or look in the mirror and say, "Am I showing up as these five adjectives?"

Cynthia Porter: I have designed nine avatars. I have an adjectives-to-avatar document, and we do some work around this. But whether it's primarily feminine or whether it's primarily sophisticated or classic or trendy or sporty, or you can do a combination of primarily classic with touches of creative, you could combine a couple of the avatars together. Then, the idea is to think of yourself in artful terms and to dress every occasion in a way that communicates that avatar or your personal brand.

Cynthia Porter: And so if you're on stage ... It's one thing if you're going to your kid's soccer match. It's another thing if you're going to a wedding, if you're going to a work presentation. And so it's more about your brand speaks for itself instead of having a symbol or some kind of a badge or something in the realm that you're talking about. So I think that's fine, if somebody has fun with that and they just love like one thing, like your scarf idea or a hat or ... I have one client, actually, who wears pearls all the time, so she nicknames herself the [Pearlpreneur 00:18:28], which I think is very cute.

Cynthia Porter: But besides that, I just think it's more about really just unconsciously communicating who you are without having that one thing.

Susan Friedmann: That's really sweet, that whole idea of being a Pearlpreneur.

Cynthia Porter: Isn't it?

Susan Friedmann: [inaudible 00:18:46] or a nichepreneur. But I'm not sure how I would dress portraying that.

Cynthia Porter: Exactly. And she's actually a financial advisor, but she just loves pearls. So she wears them every single day and makes a joke about it.

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- Susan Friedmann: She becomes known as the pearl lady. That could be working to her advantage. The people remember her.
- Cynthia Porter: Exactly. If there's something like that that you absolutely love, then I would say go for it and build it in. But I guess I think it's more fun to have variety, to have a whole bunch of accessories and to maybe wear a scarf one day and a necklace another day. I mean, it's limiting when you choose to just do that one thing. Everybody is unique, and everybody is complex, and every situation is different. The goal is to just really figure out what speaks to you. And if you can get excited about something and stick to it ... And I guess another key, when you were asking me about that, is to be consistent.
- Cynthia Porter: We want to be intentional, but you also then want to be consistent. Sometimes my clients are like, "Yeah, but when I'm just running around town, I just don't care." That's your choice, but you never know where you're going to see your next best client, you're going to run into an existing client or an opportunity. You still want to be able to go to the grocery store and dress for the grocery store, but you can do that on brand. That's how I feel about it.
- Susan Friedmann: The mind boggles. I'm thinking of this pearl lady going to the supermarket in her pearls.
- Cynthia Porter: But you know what? She could have jeans and a T-shirt on and a pearl necklace, right? Why not?
- Susan Friedmann: Why not? Absolutely. And the same going to this kid's sporting events. Cyndy, how can our listeners find out more about you and your services?
- Cynthia Porter: Probably the best way is to go to my website, Success thru Style. Spelled wrong, t-h-r-u. That's probably the best way. Successthustyle.com. And I'm also active at LinkedIn and Facebook and Pinterest. That's what I would recommend.
- Susan Friedmann: And I know I went to your website and you've got this cute little quiz on determining your style. Is that where you work with and find out what their avatar is?
- Cynthia Porter: Exactly. So, it's quick and dirty. Sometimes it's accurate, and sometimes it's not. I would say we've got about an 80% accuracy of when you take that quiz, it actually ends up with your primary avatar. But it's really fun

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to take, and it's a good way to get started. And a lot of times, here's what happens, is that people think that they like a certain style of clothing and they're told they're an avatar that's different from that. But if we dig deeper, it ends up being true that that quiz was right, that even though they might like flowy clothes and to shop at somewhere like Anthropology, they really are more classic. And if they had an intentional brand, maybe there is a change that should happen.

Susan Friedmann: Just brings up certain things for me as well when I think about, "Well, I maybe should break out of the style that I'm in," but I always go into a store and look for the same colors — blue or black or a beige or something that I feel attracted to or now purple. And yet I think, "Well, maybe I should break out of that," but I'm still ... Sort of it's like this magnetic force to colors that I enjoy.

Cynthia Porter: It's really normal, and you were habituated, right? But we all are habituated. It's the reason that studies show that we only wear, the average woman only wears 20% of her closet and 80% just hangs there, because we get in the habit of putting together outfits the same way. And it's the same thing when we shop, so I think that it's helpful to have somebody push you out of your comfort zone. And in all of my work, how I'm a little bit different than a typical ... when I do the style work, is that I am about teaching my clients, number one, their brand. And then number two, using art principles to dress their bodies so that now they can challenge themselves and they have their own set of rules and guidelines. They walk away, kind of for the rest of their lives, thinking about how they dress differently, which is really the most empowering. Right? It's more empowering to do it for yourself than to rely on somebody else to do it for you.

Susan Friedmann: I feel so much better about my wardrobe now, knowing that I'm like everybody else. Clothes that I don't wear. Cyndy, if you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be?

Cynthia Porter: I am all about self-confidence, and I believe that we can't live our best lives if we don't believe in ourselves. And you know from my bio, you shared with your listeners that that's something I struggled with a great deal of time in my life. I realized that when I overcame those issues, that now I'm just so much happier and I'm standing up for myself and I'm pushing through boundaries. At the end of the day, for a writer, for an entrepreneur, for a business owner, for your listeners, to do whatever you can so that you believe in yourself, that you look in the mirror, that you feel great about who you are and that you aren't afraid to tell

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somebody you have a book, to raise your hand to do a presentation. It really comes down to you are awesome just the way you are and that you have a message that the world should hear and to go before it.

Susan Friedmann:

You're awesome just the way you are, Cyndy. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and thank you all for taking time out of your precious day to listen to this interview. And I sincerely hope that it sparked some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.